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**Experiential Education:
Teaching English Language to Adults**

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Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

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ABSTRACT: The diploma thesis focuses on experiential education as a possible and efficient methodology for teaching ESL to adult learners. The theoretical part scrutinizes the key principles of the method and investigates its background. In addition, the thesis clarifies the concept of learning styles and Kolb's Learning Cycle. The following sections deal with the adult learner as a specific type of learner with his characteristic needs and factors influencing his SLA. Furthermore, the benefits of experiential education for the adult learner are considered. The practical part introduces several concrete activities using elements of experiential education. These activities were described in detail and piloted in a group of adult learners.

KEYWORDS: humanistic approach, experiential education, Kolb's Learning Cycle, adult learner

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ABSTRAKT: Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na zážitkové vzdělávání jako možnou a efektivní metodologii pro výuku dospělého žáka. Teoretická část zkoumá klíčové principy zážitkového vzdělávání a pozadí metodologie. Dále práce objasňuje pojetí učebních stylů a Kolbův učební cyklus. Následující části zkoumají specifika dospělého žáka, jeho potřeby a faktory ovlivňující jeho osvojování druhého jazyka. Autorka rovněž zvažuje přínosy zážitkového vzdělávání pro dospělého žáka. Praktická část představuje několik konkrétních aktivit s prvky zážitkové pedagogiky. Tyto aktivity jsou detailně popsány a byly vyzkoušeny při výuce ve skupině dospělých žáků.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: humanistický přístup, zážitkové vzdělávání, Kolbův učební cyklus, dospělý žák

THEORETICAL PART

1 Introduction

*“Give a man a fish and he will not be hungry.
Teach a man to fish and he will never be hungry.”*
Chinese proverb

1.1 New Epoch – New Paradigm

Our society has been constantly reshaping and the needs of learners have changed a great deal being followed by the shift of their demands. To satisfy these new requirements, it is most of all our educational system and every single teacher personally that need to react to these changes and be “updated”. The expansion of E-learning and other individual learning methods has put the position of the teacher in danger and the traditional role of the teacher as our parents knew it is lacking legitimacy these days. Recent research, in neuroscience especially, has advanced and cast more light on issues, such as how we process new information, how our memory functions or what the process of learning is all about. In this respect, it is in our own interest to work towards a more efficient concept of school and education in general that would meet the needs of a learning individual in our society. Moreover, it is not only a deviation from the traditional methods of teaching but also an unflagging discussion of what meaningful content and extent of tuition is, which opens the doors to alternative forms of education and teaching. Still, it needs to be mentioned that the teacher–student relationship has changed a great deal; with the global Internet expansion, teachers have been robbed off their prerogative to have access to information and knowledge.

To a certain degree, all these changes have been noticed by some quick-witted individuals and institutions, who successfully reacted by offering new services and implementing modern methods in the context of education mainly in adult education. When browsing the Internet, it is mostly private companies who offer new methods, e.g. Superlearning, the Silva Method and other, who specialize in personal development, meta-cognitive strategies development, and gain money from coaching and mentoring of individuals eager to achieve their full potential. Holistic attitude towards one's self and learning has gained respect as well and the idea of lifelong learning or the increasing number of the Universities of the Third Age. This new development has clearly uncovered the future possibilities of adult education.

One of the new trends in learning is also experiential education, which has been developing for several decades now; however, its possibilities and limits have not been explored fully yet. Except for a holistic approach to learning and a shift towards personal responsibility, experiential education is characterized by the presence of experience and its conscious reflection as an elementary key to learning. Since its beginnings in 1970s, it has developed into several branches with their own specific features of which some found their home in Czechoslovakia and then, in the Czech Republic. When introducing Czech organizations with a long tradition, *Association of Scouts and Guides of the Czech Republic* and *Vacation School Lipnice*¹ should not be left out. Nevertheless, experiential education so far has been more connected to outdoor activities, personal development and social-pathological phenomena prevention than to language learning even though there exist several studies related to experiential learning in second language classrooms.

¹ *Vacation School Lipnice* is a non-profit Czech organization preparing experiential courses encouraging personality development. Their goal is to prepare young people for their future life and profession (Hanuš & Chytilová 2009).

1.2 Motivation

In an old shabby university lecture room, there are about twelve undergraduates sitting at their desks arranged in a circle with their eyes fixed on a young lady in front of them. She is speaking about language changes that happened centuries ago as if it was just yesterday the Middle English [e:] raised to Modern English [i:]. The young lady is engrossed in her narration, from time to time citing from a book she is holding and regularly pauses to answer other students' questions. When her narration stops, it is mostly for the other participants to slip into a discussion about a questionable issue. When no satisfactory arguments or solutions are found, their eyes turn to an assistant professor, who is sitting nearby and comes with an answer. For the rest of the seminar, the students are working in smaller groups checking home assignments, seeking answers for the questions they were given by the assistant professor while the young lady guarantees expert supervision. There is just one interruption when none of the present knows the right answer which prompts the assistant to leave the class and find solution in a Middle English dictionary.

I happened to be one of the students in the room and should admit that this was the only seminar of such a type I had the chance to experience during that time at the university. It was the only one but very inspiring, though. The seminar lasted no longer than one term; however, the way the assistant professor supervised or did not supervise the students, indeed, the seminars was so efficient that at the end of the course all students were perfectly ready to take the final exam without extra home study. Since it were students who were in power during the seminar, and with great power comes great responsibility, we were naturally compelled to be more responsible in our home studying than other students. This situation in the classroom completely illustrated the theory of our assistant professor, who once said that students should be the ones to come

home exhausted, full of new knowledge and skills whereas the teacher should abound with energy. This alternative and very efficient – in comparison to other university courses – way of instruction was so stimulating that it has found its place in my memory until now and it has inspired me a great deal in my personal ongoing discussion on what teaching adults should be like and look like. It is certain that the described experience (and this whole text will be mostly concerned with experience) has formed my beliefs about education and teaching and thus contributed to the idea of this thesis.

Choosing the topic of experiential education in adult language learning was driven both by my experience gained so far and by my effort to facilitate language learning and make it more accessible and intelligible to adult learners whose needs in learning differ a great deal from children as described in depth in chapter 4. I have encountered experiential teaching as a learner or participant many times before; unfortunately, in non-formal education only. It was one of my personal wishes to make use of the knowledge and experience I have collected outside the standard Czech school tuition, which I considered rigid and outdated in many respects. Whilst some organizations and associations in the Czech Republic have been constantly developing and improving their know-how in new methods of teaching and learning, most schools providing formal education have been sleeping at the switch when adopting new methods and models came into question. The interconnection of experiential education and language learning turned out to be an interesting issue to look into.

1.3 Goals

The major aim of this thesis constitutes the application of the experiential learning methodology onto the second-language learning to adults with the focus on English; by doing so the interfaces between teaching adults and experiential learning should emerge. Furthermore, the focus will be on the adult learner as a distinctive type of learner, whose needs will be scrutinized, and it will be illustrated how these needs could be met by methods of experiential learning. In the practical part, the aforementioned objectives

will be demonstrated on several language activities created with respect to the principles of experiential learning. Every activity has been separately elaborated and piloted in a group of adult English language learners and it is supplemented by a subsequent evaluation from the piloting. In addition, the diploma thesis also intends to open a discussion about the benefits and limitations of the methodology for both adult learners and their teachers. Whereas the practical part presents solely ideas and know-how of the author of this text, the theoretical part concentrates predominantly on technical background and introduces research that has been done in this area so far as well as it draws closer several names connected to the concept of experiential education and its development.

This thesis supposes that experiential education with its methods of teaching and principals of learning can enliven existing methods and approaches towards language education; furthermore, it reacts to the current demands that are placed on an adult individual who adheres to the values of today's Western society, on one hand, and to the requirements imposed on employees that are demanded by their employers, on the other. The permanent call for flexibility and readiness to face new requirements on the labour market represent the current challenges for a job applicant; therefore, mastering hard skills in the given field will not suffice. Instead of that, soft skills, such as confidence and communication skills, team building, self-management skills and other would be expected and demanded.

In this respect, experiential education offers a methodology, which can meet the needs of the current adult individual and lift up his competitiveness on the modern labour market. So far, the principals of experiential education have been successfully applied in many areas of adult education; however, not much research has been done in the field of second-language learning and teaching, as has been mentioned earlier, which turned out to be very obstructive when searching for resources to write this thesis. Yet, the methodology has already been used for language instruction in several special courses or workshops usually interconnected with outdoor activities and/or unconventional learning environment. Nevertheless, the hypothesis put forward in this text

supposes that the methods using elements of experiential learning can be successfully applied in a standard language class room with basic teaching aids and little room only. For this particular reason, the practical part focuses on second language learners attending public courses in language schools or company courses where the possibilities are limited in many respects.

1.4 Structure and Terminology

This thesis is divided into two separate parts as stated above. The theoretical part, chapter 2 namely, introduces the origins of experiential education as a movement, attempts to define the concept and focuses on the key principles of experiential education as a methodology. Throughout the third chapter, attention is step by step shifted from general didactics to subject didactics and experiential methodology, the focus is on practical aspects of the method. Finally, chapter 4 scrutinizes the factors that have an impact on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and briefly looks into andragogy² when describes the adult learner as a distinctive type of learner with his characteristic needs. and specific features.

The practical part, on the contrary, considers application of the methodology in the class. It contains six activities demonstrating the method in practice under the conditions set earlier in this text. Each activity constitutes a part of a larger pack, which includes the description of the activity, teacher's notes, student's worksheet (if needed) and notes from the piloting of the activity with a concrete group of students. The piloting contains notes from the observation of the instructing teacher (the author of this text and activities at the same time) during the activity and her evaluation of the activity after.

² Andragogy is a concept developed by M. Knowles (Knowles 1980) who asserted that adult learning differs a great deal from pedagogy – child learning. His concept was based on assumptions about the characteristic features of the adult learner. Knowles basically laid the grounds of adult learning.

In order to keep the distinction between the teacher and the learner clear, the teacher will be referred to as “she” and the learner will be referred to as “he” with no relation to their gender. In the piloting sections, on the contrary, the gender of the learners will correspond to the actual gender of the students engaged in the piloting. In addition, within experiential education as the object of study experiential learning and experiential teaching will be distinguished. Very shortly to understand the following text, learning will be understood as a process of gaining knowledge, skills, attitudes and patterns of behaviour from the position of the learner; teaching, on the other hand, will be defined as the process of mediation of the aforementioned by a teacher.

2 The Theory of Experiential Education

“All learning is a process of contextualization.”
M. A. K. Halliday

2.1 Origins of Experiential Learning

The duty of this beginning section is to open the matter and describe the background on which the idea of experience as a personal source of knowledge and learning was born. Its beginnings are very tightly related to the studies of human mind and personal development in psychology. That is certainly one of the reasons why the whole methodology of experiential education has been constructed on the research and investigation of one's learning, moreover, his attitude towards this process.

Viljo Kohonen, a professor of foreign language education at the University of Tampere in Finland, in his study (2001) mentions several names as grounds for experiential learning; these are: Dewey's progressive approach, Lewin's social psychology, Piaget's developmental cognitive psychology, Kelly's cognitive theory of personality and some works of Maslow and Rogers. These great names are mentioned in order to slightly uncover the roots of experiential education but as there is no room to describe all inspiring ideas suggested by the names stated above, at least some major works these researchers wrote/have written should be mentioned. In the following books more information about particular approaches and conceptions can be found: *Experience and Education* by Dewey (1963), *Experience and Nature* (Dewey:1994), *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected theoretical papers* by Lewin (1951), *Freedom to Learn* by Rogers (1969) and *Theory of Human Motivation* by Maslow (1943). As a

method of teaching, experiential education has been considerably inspired by humanistic approach to education, mostly in the way it treats the learner, which will be dealt with in the section 3.3 .Yet, the list of names previously mentioned is certainly not complete and it will be continuously supplemented by other names, concepts or theories that might have contributed to experiential learning and its forms as they are presented today.

An explanation of this incompleteness should not be left out although the reason is rather prosaic. When searching for information to write this diploma thesis, a phenomenon that will penetrate this whole thesis, occurred, i.e., the confusion and disagreement that encircles many aspects related to the concept of experiential learning and education. The reasons for this confusion are many and some of them will be mentioned in different spots within this text so that a clearer image of the concept could be drawn. One of the reasons is – and it leads straight back to the roots of the movement – that researchers and academics cannot fully agree on what the origins of experiential education really are; moreover, various books present different sources and names in this context.

Other researchers, in comparison to Kohonen, present also other names as origins of experiential education; for instance, Kolb (1984) speaks also about C. Jung, E. Ericson, P. Freire or I. Illich, who later participated in the development of the experiential model of education, learning included. What many researchers agree on is that the beginning of experiential education was related to a movement that started in 1960s in the United States (Tudor 2001) and that its grounds lie in several fields since it has been an object of research in various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, didactics, and other.

From the above mentioned names, two will be addressed in this text on a regular basis: David A. Kolb and John Dewey. They both represent important contributors to the model of experiential education; precisely, Dewey (Miettinen 2000) dealt with the question of reflective experience, which was necessary for successful facing difficulties

arising from habitual ways of action. Besides that, he (Dewey 1994) stressed how important the reflection of experience is for he argued that not every experience results into learning. Later, Kolb advanced the model of experiential education into a practical instrument of didactic methodology, which nowadays represents the starting point for most forms and applications of experiential method. More references about his work and a concise insight into his concept is the subject matter of section 3.1 and 3.2.

2.2 How to Define Experiential Education?

When exploring a new matter, it has proved necessary in the past to set clear-cut boundaries and give the amorphous substance an explicit shape. The boundaries can be delimited by a definition of the subject explored. For this very reason, a few definitions of experiential education will be introduced in order to see the shape of the matter and the principles that underpin the concept. Both will be discussed in the following text..

The first official definition of experiential education was coined by *The Association for Experiential Learning (AEL)*. *AEL* described experiential education as “the process through which the learner constructs knowledge, skill, and values through direct experience” (*AEL* cited in Bunting 2006:243). It stressed the role of the learner and his direct experience. To compare, according to Beard & Wilson (2002:16), experiential learning is “the insight gained through conscious and unconscious internalization of our own observed experiences which build upon our past experiences or knowledge”. Another interesting point was made by Carver (1996:151) when she stressed the role of senses and emotional dimension; she speaks of experiential education as “(...) education (...) that makes conscious application of the students' experiences by integrating them into the curriculum. Experience involves any combination of senses (...)”. Next to all human senses, she points out also emotions, physical condition and cognition.

Definitions of experiential education will be concluded by Tudor and Saddington. Tudor, in contrast to the previous researchers, focuses on experiential learning in second language learning, which is the same subject matter of investigation as the one this thesis is dealing with. Similarly to *AEL*, Tudor (2001:79) also incorporates direct experience when stating that experiential learning is learning that “(...) revolves around direct experience of the TL [target language] for communicative purposes as a basis for learning,” but moreover, he emphasizes the communicative dimension of learning. The last definition comes from Saddington (1992:14), who sees experiential learning as “(...) a process in which an experience is reflected upon and then translated into concepts which in turn become guidelines for new experiences.” Saddington considers establishing a bridge between the 'old learner' and the 'new learner' which is characterized by learner's personal growth and a change that takes place between the old experience, its reflection, and the new experience. This new experience shall be underpinned and supported by the “guidelines” he mentions, gained during the process.

Being aware of the fact that many other definitions could be presented and discussed, the few introduced entail the key to experiential education. To summarize, it is the process, which many authors point out as the characteristic aspect of experiential education and learning, that is meant to result in establishing an insight and guidelines that learners could apply to further learning in the future. The process is mediated by direct experience whereas the insight and guidelines as a framework for the follow-up learning are gained with the support of a reflection of the process³. The question how important the two – experience and its reflection are – will be dealt with later (see chapter 3).

Before getting closer to the main principles of the approach, several terms within this text should be clarified. Firstly, the distinction between experiential education and experiential learning is to be made clear. A very brief definition appeared in the introductory chapter; nevertheless, since more aspects of the matter have

³ The same conclusion is supported by other investigators as well (e.g. Miettinen 2006).

appeared on the scene, the original definition will be refined and specifies. Within this entire text, experiential education will be understood as a concept, approach and methodology in didactics or theory of education which has been developing since the beginning of the 20th century, has its roots predominantly in psychological works of several authors and has been substantially influenced, besides other approaches, by humanistic psychology and constructivism. In addition, experiential learning will denote such type of learning that operates with direct experience that is reflected. Furthermore, experiential learning is the major subject matter of experiential education. Secondly, based on the previously defined, experiential teaching will be perceived as an approach or methodology that directly refers to the concept of experiential education, uses its methods and promotes the use of experiential concepts in learning over other methods.

2.3 Key Principles

Since the first ideas on experiential education were born, many works have been devoted to understanding of the concept. Most of these works suggest that experiential learning can provide a framework for new approaches to learning; however, there again appears to be a great deal of difference between various views, mainly on the application of the concept in practice and the principles that underlie it. Within this section, several views of what these principles are will be presented. The main interest of this section is to find common features that foster the concept of experiential learning and at the same time correspond to learning English as a second language.

Tudor (2001) presents five major principles that can be applied to any form of experiential education. These are:

- 1) *Message focus*: This principle is based on the belief that “(...) message conveyance and communicative practice are effective means of stimulating the learning process and of helping learners to develop their communicative skills” (2001:80). This principle Tudor considers as the most salient condition of experiential learning for it is

connected to arranging such conditions in which students get opportunity to use a language to communicate in contrast to a bare study of language principles as linguistic phenomena. Real tasks serve as vehicles for learning.

2) *Holistic practice*: The central point of the principle is the task itself, the real performance as opposed to language components which are used only as means to reach the goal. This implies that learning is not about the subject; on the contrary, it is the subject itself.

3) *The use of authentic materials*: Authentic materials naturally occur in the learner's environment and their primary function is unrelated to language learning. It should be noted that current creators of language learning materials made a significant contribution to presenting authentic material that is worked with in the classrooms.

4) *The use of communication strategies*: As has been stated before, Tudor's definition of experiential learning is based on the fact that learners grasp experience from communicative situations which provides the basis for their learning.

5) *The use of collaborative modes of learning*: Experiential education stands as a didactic model that supports learners' collaboration, pair work or group work.

In comparison, a different concept was presented by Carver (1996:152) who considers four key pedagogical principles experiential education stands on:

1) *Authenticity*: What happens during the process of experiential education has to be “relevant” to the learners' lives and such that it helps learners realize the reasons for their participation in the learning process.

2) *Active learning*: Activities chosen by the teacher should have an impact on learners' physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

3) *Drawing on student experience*: “Students are guided in the process of building understandings of phenomena, events, human nature, etc. by thinking about what they have experienced.” Nonetheless, Carver says “guided”, which does not tell much about the characteristics of the guiding itself.

4) *Providing mechanisms for connecting experience to future opportunity*: By these mechanisms Carver means reflecting the past experience with the participants to make it relevant to their future.

Furthermore, Carver (ibid.:154) states three categories of sub-goals of experiential educational programmes. These sub-goals can hardly represent measurable goals but they suggest some desired effects of experiential education:

- *Agency*: Learners should be given opportunities to gain power over their lives and change. This sub-goal is closely related to personal growth (which is treated in 4.2.2) as one of the values that experiential education tries to provide instruments for. This point, in particular, is important not only to experiential education but overall attitude towards a human being since it aims at maintaining personal freedom of any individual.
- *Belonging*: Learners and teachers should consider themselves as parts of an established group where everyone has his/her rights and responsibilities and the group cooperates as a whole.
- *Competence*: Learners should gain and develop such competences that they can apply in their lives.

The fore-mentioned goals cannot be exhaustive but they certainly establish a ground that can be reflected upon later. Moreover, especially the content of Carver's three sub-goals undoubtedly extends the boundaries of the methods of experiential education but seen in a wider context, it can represent general principals to follow to become a satisfied and successful individual in this society, who is in control of his life and things around him, who shares his feelings and competences, and who is in power of such skills that enable the two previous points.

3 From Theory to Practice

So far, the beginning of the movement has been foreshadowed, the key principles of the method were collected and experiential learning as a didactic concept was defined; to summarize, some very rough theoretical background has been provided. Throughout this section, attention will be focused primarily on practical aspects of the method and its application. Accordingly, in the next part, experiential education will be predominantly referred to as a method since it is its didactic background which will be dealt with. Initially, an important contribution of D. Kolb will be introduced in order to draw a picture of how he has shifted the discussion and thinking about experiential education. Kolb, who substantially advanced the model of experiential education in 1980s, laid the foundations most researchers and educators build on nowadays.

3.1 Learning Styles

Everything started in 1971 when David Kolb, a social psychologist and educational theoretician, designed a framework to assess individual styles of learning called *Learning Style Inventory (LSI)*. The first version of his *LSI* comes from 1969 and it has been revised since its first concept several times (for a summary of existing versions see Kolb & Kolb 2005). A learning style is one's specific individual set of ways in which he as a learner approaches a learning task (Hartley 1998). Kolb observed and tested learners to evaluate their patterns of learning and later, the outcomes of his examination were transformed into an instrument assessing learning styles, *LSI*. The research has shown that there were four dominant common styles of learning with respect to the learning abilities of the researched learners. Kolb interpreted these styles as: *accommodating*, *diverging*, *assimilating*, and *converging*. Each of the styles could be

defined by the prevailing way a learner acquires knowledge, abilities that enable his learning, activities or methods he prefers when learning, his individual way of solving problems, and his preference between cooperating with others or working individually.

Kolb's *LSI* was not the only typology classifying various learning styles⁴. Cassidy notes that a relevant attention has been given to researching learning styles for about four decades (Cassidy 2004). Other researchers have proposed different models based on various aspects of an individual: types of personality, professional career, adaptive abilities and others. Not all of those models have received much attention, nevertheless, quite a recent study on the research in learning styles and different conceptions was written by Cassidy (2004) in her study on learning styles. What is important to this research is that individual learning differences have been taken into account and that modern didactic methods have been trying to interpret these new findings and incorporate them in didactic methods. So does Kolb when demonstrating individual learning abilities related to the four learning styles mentioned before. It needs to be accepted that learning styles are just 'a drop in the sea' of comparable differences among learners. For instance, Svinicki (1999:16-17) labels learning styles as “strategies for learning” and lists them next to five other learner variables influencing one's learning.

Kolb developed a model of learning which counts on all learning styles in his *LSI* model and in which learning is understood as a conflict of two opposite dimensions: the *prehension dimension* and the *transformation dimension*. The *prehension dimension* is related to the means and strategies one uses to gain experience. The *transformation dimension* explores the transformation of his (learner's) experience through reflective observation or active experimentation. These two dimensions are demonstrated by four learning skills: *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization* and *active experimentation*. (See Figure 3.2)

⁴ See Pritchard (2009) for a brief outline of learning styles

What is meant by these four types of learning skills suggested by Kolb will be clarified in greater detail (1975:4):

- *Concrete experience* is the most salient aspect for individuals who learn by intuition, who abstract knowledge from personal experience and feeling. They prefer group work, simulation techniques, role plays, stories, videos, examples, etc.
- *Reflective observation* is the most salient for individuals who learn by perception. They observe action to understand the situation and the ideas. The best techniques for these learners include reflective writing, discussions, observation reports, personal journals, etc.
- *Abstract conceptualization* is the most salient for individuals who learn by thinking about the situation and the ideas. They focus on abstract ideas which they need to frame, define and classify. They enjoy techniques, such as building models or analogies, lecturing, constructing theories, and other.
- *Active experimentation* is the most salient for individuals who learn by real examples, hands-on experience, who need to take action to understand the matter. These learners are not afraid to experiment, they prefer project work, field work, simulations, games, and so forth.

What has been presented about Kolb's contribution to the research on learning so far is this: first, he assessed individuals learning and elaborated on four predominant learning styles in his *LSI* (*accommodating, diverging, converging, assimilating*); second, on the basis of the learning styles Kolb demonstrated four ways of processing new information by an individual (by *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization* or *active experimentation*); and third, he succeeded in using theoretical knowledge of his predecessors about experiential education and applied it in practice with the support of his four-staged concept of learning.

3.2 Kolb's Learning Cycle

A concept that combines the triad of Kolb's contributions summarized previously is known as the *Kolb's Learning Cycle* (1984). Its main benefit is its successful integration of learning styles and learning skills into a complex and elegant model, which is characterized by two bipolar dimensions and four learning steps. The process of learning starts with *concrete experience*, which is followed by *reflective observation*. The next step is characterized by the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations (*abstract conceptualization*) and the last step closing the cycle, is *active experimentation*. *Active experimentation* completes the learning cycle; however, its aim is to construct a spiral rather than a cycle (see Figure 3.2). In active experimentation the learner builds on the knowledge and skills he has acquired during the previous steps. The last step should correspond to a certain degree to the first step but it is enriched by the knowledge and experience gathered throughout the entire cycle.

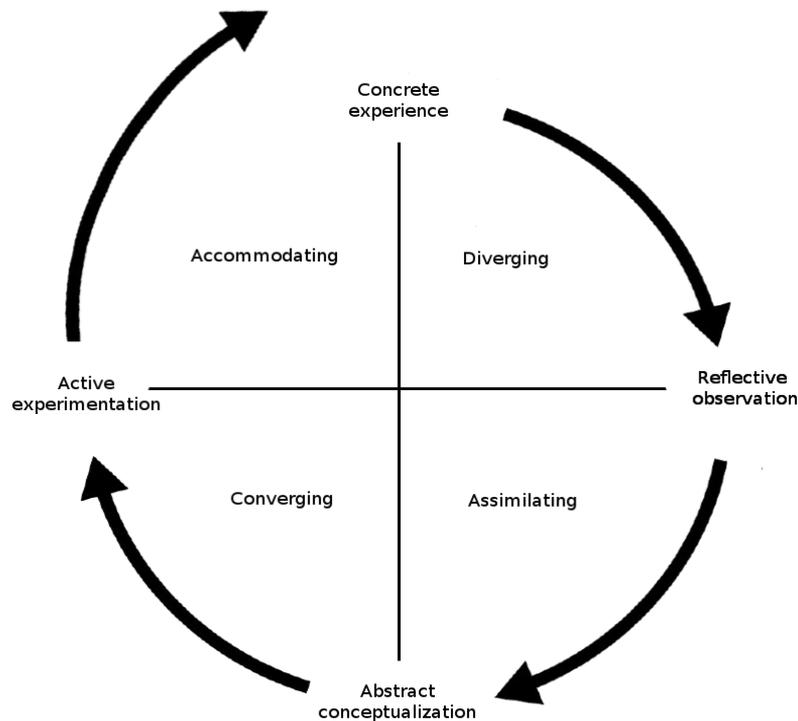


Figure 3.2: Kolb's Learning Cycle

The last section has shown possible output of the learning styles research: how can these findings be used to expand our knowledge about the process of learning and how learners with diverse learning abilities can find useful support in the spiral of the *Kolb's Learning Cycle* when learning from their experience. In the next paragraphs, the major concern moves from the concepts and principles into a real, idealized though, class (meant as a lectured class or language lesson wherever it takes place) supervised by a teacher and attended by students. Nevertheless, for a fuller understanding of experiential learning the roles and relationships between the participants of the educational process and their environment need to be scrutinized in more detail.

3.3 Teacher, Learner and Environment of Education

These three elements (the teacher, the learner, and the learning environment) create a triad that encapsulates the three important constituents of the process of education. A similar construct is offered by Chapman (1992:20), who highlights “experiential education as a set of relationships”. In the next section, experiential education as a relationship of the learner to self, the teacher to learner and the learner to learning environment will be described. Some of the points made in the context of the principles of experiential education will be illustrated. It needs to be borne in mind that it illustrates a model only, an idealized state or the supreme level, that can be reached in a class, as is presented here.

3.3.1 Teacher to Learner

The teacher conveys several roles in the class. Primarily, she is a facilitator, who encourages learners during the process of education and motivates. Carver (1996:151) compares the teacher to “a guide” who should have “a map of the terrain” in order to work effectively and prevent the participants from danger. By “the terrain” she means all conditions of the group or individual, such as emotional, physical, etc.

One of the important tasks of the teacher is to create situations in which the learner is given a reason to use the target language (ibid.:27). Speaking about Carver, according to her, other task of the teacher is also to strive for reaching such conditions during her teaching which would support the development of the three sub-goal categories: *agency*, *belonging*, and *competence*. Furthermore, she states that teachers are supposed to bring material to classes, decide how it will be used and influence students' experience by their resourceful reactions and responses. The teacher should endeavour to mediate new experience that would enable the learners to achieve desirable learning changes (Rogers 2002). Moreover, Chapman (1992) argues that it is up to the teacher to maintain a physically, emotionally and intellectually safe environment where the student can develop his potential. The importance of supportive affective environment in modern history of education originates in humanistic approach towards education.

In experiential education, mistakes are treated as a part of the process, they are a rich source of experience one can learn from. Proudman (1992) maintains that they are a natural part of the learning process and Beard & Wilson (2006:29) claim that they allow us “(...) to find and identify information and knowledge that can help chart courses of action that will lead to the optimal solution.”

3.3.2 Learner to Self

How the learner is treated in experiential education corresponds in many respects to the constructivist approach (e.g. Rogers 1951, 1969). In their view the learner is active and responsible for his learning, not a passive responder. He brings personal contributions and experience into classes. Carver also (1996) claims that learner is perceived as an important resource for his own learning and for learning of the other students and during his education, he gains growing responsibility for his own progress and outcome (e.g. Proudman 1993). This attitude to learner's responsibility has been often referred to as self-directed learning (more on this matter in section 4.2.1). A good point makes Kohonen (1992:23) when he asserts that “Self-direction describes an attitude to

learning, where the learner assumes increasing responsibility for the decisions concerning his or her learning but does not necessarily undertake the implementation of all of those decisions alone.”

The learner to succeed in learning must be also motivated because “(...) learning attitude and motivation are important predictors of achievement (ibid.:22)”. Next to motivation and responsibility, the learner also acquires general learning skills and metacognitive skills (Asher 2003) which help him in being a more effective language learner (Chamot 1987). These are both strategies assisting the student in gaining command over the new language skills. To summarize, the learner should be a part friendly atmosphere, strain for a common purpose and share the responsibility for taking decisions.

3.3.3 Learner to Environment

In experiential education, a great part of the learning process is realized by experimenting and experiencing. It is also also referred to as hands-on experience or learning-by-doing. Kohonen claims (1992:25) that students should be enabled to individualize and personalize the learning material and situation during the educational process. This claim can be also related to the learner-centred approach which has shifted the attention from the teacher as an authority to the learner, establishing an opposite approach (against the traditional teacher-only-authority model).

According to Tudor's second principle, authentic language and authentic communicative situations are used in the class (lesson). At the heart of the problem strikes Kohonen (2006:29) when claiming that “Learning is thus seen as a continuous process aiming at an incrementally fine-tuned understanding of the system and an increasingly automatized use of it in meaningful communication with plenty of opportunities for practice.”

As has been previously stated, the learners also acquire knowledge and skills about learning. They should come to a knowledge of meta-skills which facilitate their learning and cooperation in classes. Since it has been asserted that within this thesis the key principles of experiential education are experience and reflection, every activity, lesson or teaching block is necessarily followed by a careful reflection of the activity or the process, where these meta-skills may be utilized.

There is also a clear link to humanistic approach in the general belief in everyone's inborn capacity to develop and learn (e.g. Miettinen 2000). Experiential education has found a great inspiration in humanistic approach and they both share common aims and principles in education. For all, the teacher as a facilitator, holistic attitude, supportive teaching environment, emphasis on individualism, learner autonomy and self-determination, etc. should be named here when comparing experiential education with the instructional principles of humanistic education as they were characterized by Shapiro (1987).

4 Adult Learner

*“Your place in the world is
where you have the most self-respect.”*
Epictetus

Having characterized the concept of experiential education and its key principles, the attention has been turned to strategies for gaining knowledge. Consequently, Kolb's *LSI* has been shown as one of the acceptable models concerned with learning styles, which led into a suggestion of *Kolb's Learning Cycle* as an experiential model of learning taking into account the diversity of preferred learning styles among learners. With respect to the main objectives of experiential education, the relationships between the learner, the teacher and the learning environment have been scrutinized. It will be the major focus of the following text to seek for attributes that adult learners have in common to see what influences and motivates their learning.

4.1 Factors Influencing Adults' SLA

4.1.1 SLA

Explaining theories underlying the concept of the second language acquisition/learning (SLA) would lie out of the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, we hold that certain aspects of this problematic are to be explained; the first relates to the ambiguity caused by an inconsistent use of the terms language learning and language acquisition, the second concerns with adult learners as a specific type of learners.

Stephen Krashen (1988) is the author of a fundamental theory of the second language acquisition known as the *Monitor Model*. The first hypothesis (the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis) of his theory based on the distinction between the second language learning and acquisition establishes grounds for his theory. He distinguishes language acquisition from language learning by claiming that language acquisition is a result of our brain's subconscious activity which is actually very similar to child's gain of the first language, on one hand; and on the other, providing that acquisition is a subconscious process, second language learning is a conscious activity conducted by an instructor (mostly a teacher), which results into a gain of knowledge 'about the language'. Even though Krashen's definition has been criticized, within this text his division of the two phenomena will be maintained. To be precise, second language learning will be understood as a process of learning a language in a situation where a guide (teacher) controlling the process is present whereas language acquisition will rather describe all situations lacking the presence of the teacher. Nevertheless, all learners should be enabled to experience such learning situations that would be very similar to the process of language acquisition.

Second language acquisition, thus, seems to be primarily a matter of adult learning, assuming that adults represent a group of population that has already acquired their first language and wish to learn another one. In this respect, another essential hypothesis, the *Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)*, should be mentioned. *CPH* introduced by Penfield & Roberts (1959), further developed by Lennenberg (1967), is based on extensive neurological research that has shown new findings about the lateralization of human brain functions and its elasticity. The results were interpreted into a theory, which may seriously discourage adult language learners in their learning by the statement that there is a critical period related to the human brain development, which has a serious impact on our ability to acquire/learn a language. After this period (which is placed somewhere about puberty), language competence and performance of the learner is marked by irreversible changes in his brain which result into a limited command of the language; indeed, as many researchers argue (Brown 1994 and others), most strikingly in their limited gain of a native-like accent. Many academics, though, do

not see enough relevant empirical support for this hypothesis (Klein 1986, Genesee in Beebe 1988). A good overview of recent researches on the topic is provided by Alene Moyer (2004) in her book *Age, Accent, and Experience in Second Language Acquisition*. On age as a deciding factor with an impact on one's language learning reflects also Slobin (1993) in his study on adult second language acquisition, where he names several factors of second language acquisition that are against adult learners in comparison to child learners. He perceives these factors as “biological handicaps” playing against adult learners. Age is seen as one of them.

4.1.2 Motivation and Intentions

The matter of language acquisition has already been briefly looked into. The difference between a child learning and an adult is associated with a lack of clarity; similarly, as has been previously mentioned, it also shows unclear how any second language is acquired and if there is a striking influence of age on learning a language resulting into different learning/acquiring processes. More discussion on this matter can be found in Perdue (Ed., 1993).

Nevertheless, what appears to be much clearer from various researches conducted in the past decades, are the possible reasons why an adult person decides to learn another language. Some researchers even argue that motivation can have a direct impact on one's performance and vice versa. For instance, Littlewood (2006:53) claims that “(...) motivation might lead to greater proficiency, but so might greater proficiency help to increase a learner's motivation.” In this part, the matter of motivation and possible intentions why an adult individual resolves to learn another language will be inspected. For this purpose, Rogers' schema (2002:77) of three basic intentions why an adult individual seeks learning will be used.

Within this context, Rogers (ibid.) distinguishes three types of reasons:

- 1) *symbolic reasons* – he sets an example of the human wish to be perceived by the others as an educated person
- 2) *opportunity reasons* – the new competence learnt will enable the learner to do or gain something even unrelated to the language learning itself
- 3) *practical reasons* – there is a clear goal the learner should reach when completing the language course, programme, etc.

Another concept was developed by Houle (1961, cited in Jarvis, Holford & Griffin 2003; Rogers 2002), who also demonstrated a triad of adult intentions to learn, with different focus, however.

- 1) *instrumental/goal-oriented* – wish to reach an external objective such as a language certificate
- 2) *process/activity-oriented* – their objective lies in the contents and the aim of the course itself, they may like the atmosphere of cooperation in a group
- 3) *subject/learning-oriented* – wish to broaden their horizons from their pure interest and love to do so

Traditional and a commonly referred to classification originates from Gardner and Lambert (1972). They see two different incentives to learn a language: *instrumental* and *integrative*. The first one, *instrumental*, is connected to a specific goal or requirements the individual wants to fulfill by learning the given language. The second, *integrative*, is connected to the learner's wish to integrate into the culture and society of the given language. Lambert's concept shows another way to look at factors that can motivate individuals to learn a language.

All of the classifications that have been described so far were directly related to language learning. Even more paragraphs could be dedicated to the research of common motivation leading an adult individual to learn, gain knowledge and skills. Many of these theories are to a great deal based on the personality of the learner, his attitude towards the world and phenomena lying outside himself, his general attitude towards learning and gaining knowledge. A brief insight into the problematic can be found for instance in Dörnyei (2001). Nevertheless, the question of motivation plays a very important role in adult's learning as well as in experiential learning. In the class, it is up to the teacher to motivate the students thus motivational part has been explicitly mentioned in the activities presented in the practical part of this thesis.

4.1.3 Some Other Aspects Influencing Adults' Learning

The previous sections have dealt with the matters of language acquisition with respect to adult learners, their possible motivation and inner motives to learn a second (third, etc.) language. The following text deals with other factors influencing adult learning.

First of all, adults in comparison to children differ in their communicative needs. It has to be mentioned that children (for our purposes rather first language learners) construct their first system to communicate starting at a very basic level and they proceed from simpler levels to more complex ones. When learning new words, they first learn very basic concrete words, mostly from the core of the word-stock, corresponding to their mental development. It takes years before they acquire the ability of abstract reasoning and before they acquire it, their language competence has been fully developed because language and thinking are interconnected. However, Slobin (1993) points out that communicative needs of an adult learner substantially surpass the limits of adult learner's language competence. Not surprisingly, adult second-language learners immediately require a large variety of different discourse functions when using a language. The inability to express the exact and intended message may prevent many learners from using the language in public or it may cause a serious disappointment and decline of their motivation.

Other factor Slobin (ibid.) mentions is that adult learners are condemned to use sounds and linguistic patterns which they acquired with their first language and try to map the new system onto the well-known system of their first language; moreover, the second language learnt can be very unrelated to their first language acquired. This fact can be easily demonstrated by an example with Czech second language learners. Many Czech learners of English as a second language have never properly learnt the pronunciation of English voiced and voiceless *th* in many words, such as 'thin' or 'wreath'. In fact, they mostly pronounce these phonemes like other, but acoustically close, sounds Czech phonetic system offers; in this case /s/, /t/ or /f/ for voiceless and /z/ or /d/ for voiced, or vice versa. Mapping the new system onto the old is a common problem often described in works concerned with second language acquisition, widely addressed as *language transfer* (e.g. Klein 1986). Moreover, *language transfer* does not apply to the phonological level only – it also becomes extensively evident in morphology, syntax and lexis. (see more in Gass & Selinker 1983).

Both described factors can noticeably contribute to a negative attitude towards learning a second language. The inability to express thoughts and ideas precisely and demonstrate them in a native-like accent can represent a serious obstacle discouraging the learner. Moreover, it has been recognized that emotional climate in the classroom plays a very significant role since it has been one of the main principles of humanistic approach to teaching (e.g. Patterson 1973). About negative emotional climate and students' hindrance to learn speaks also Littlewood (2006:59) when stating, “Their [learner's] sense of alienation may be increased by the fact that they are having to re-learn the conversations which surround simple daily events, such as eating in a restaurant or approaching an acquaintance”. Within this context she goes much further when using the term “reduced person” to illustrate the problem of learning a second language. On the other hand, she admits that anxiety preventing successful language learning, on one side, can be to a certain degree motivating, on the other. Similar conclusions are made by Krashen (1987) when asserting three variables influencing successful language gain two of which are self-confidence and low anxiety.

It has been already written that adults compared to children have more complex communicative needs. They are impelled to re-learn what they have already learnt, they have to reduce their demands on complex well elaborated utterances and often simplify the message they intend to convey. Though, when compared to children, they possess a “well of resources” (Rogers uses this term in his book *Teaching Adults*, 2002) they can draw experience from. Within this thesis this “well” will be termed *background knowledge*. Background knowledge is an expression used by McKay & Tom (1999:3) and behind this term they see “experience gained from work or home”. As background knowledge we can count also skills and knowledge acquired during previous school education, social and cultural background of students. There is a great potential that should be used and it is one of the main roles of the teacher to benefit from this background knowledge that every adult learner can offer. McKay & Tom argue that “By drawing on the students' previous knowledge, the teacher not only validates a lifetime of learning but also has a base on which to build new knowledge.”, which is something the model of experiential education also works with.

This thesis has already touched upon the fact that an adult learner is not a 'tabula rasa'; on the contrary, he is a rich source of skills and knowledge he has learnt in his life. Not only has he learnt certain knowledge and skills but he has acquired strategies and techniques to process them, as well. During his lifelong process of learning, he has been refining something what Rogers (2002) describes as “patterns of learning”. He, as well as other researchers' recent approaches, supports the widely accepted idea that every learner is endowed with his own specific learning style which helps him in transforming new information into knowledge, skills or attitudes. The question of learning styles has already been touched upon earlier in this text. An experienced teacher has to be ready for such a situation where in a class of ten adult learners, every learner has different background, different motivation, and each varies in the set of learning strategies he uses. Although this situation poses great demands on the personality and competences of the teacher, he should try to meet the needs of various learners in the group. This is one of the difficulties experiential education is trying to deal with.

Not being 'tabula rasa' also implies that adult learners have not only fixed habits in their learning but as McKay and Tom (1999) note, they may be burdened by expectancy of what a language class should be like. Moreover, previous language learning experience can direct them in a particular way that can later show as restrictive and possibly limiting to their new learning. In this respect, every new teaching method can be exposed to a very critical judgment from the side of those on whom the method is being applied and it is up to the teacher to give the method a meaning that he could share with the learners. This point is also mentioned by Svinicki in one of her "learner variables". She claims that, "Students who believe that knowledge is a resource provided by an authority will have a very different approach to learning and goals from a student who believes he can create his own understanding" (1999:17-18).

Other substantial difference typical of adult learners was discovered by Rogers. He speaks of immediate use of the information learnt. A school-age child has no choice because his attendance of school is obligatory and most activities that take place behind the door of this institution are obligatory as well. Every now and then, this child is reassured (mostly by teachers and parents) of the future benefit that the knowledge gained will bring him. Children have to accept that their future self will get a chance to use what they have been taught at school. Adult learners, on the contrary, require this benefit immediately. Rogers states that: "Unlike children, adults have the opportunity and the means to implement their learning immediately rather than wait until 'they are grown up'"(2002:75) . He makes an interesting comment here when arguing that the reason for this is their need to improve their personal lives (ibid.) .

Last but not least, the influence of one's personality on his learning should not be forgotten. Adult's personality is a set of features that characterize it. They use fixed learning strategies and during their life, they create a complex set of values and attitudes towards various matters surrounding them. The last mentioned is also one of the features that define an adult as an adult or a mature person. In the past, there were several researches focusing on the influence of one's personality on his learning ability. Littlewood (2006:64), for example, argues that extraverted people may have an

advantage in their ability of dealing with social contacts which provide them more situations to practise and they may be less anxious when using the language in any social interaction. She illustrates her idea mentioning a study by Adelaide Hayde (Hayde 1979, in Littlewood 2006), who found a relationship between language learning and self-esteem. Higher self-esteem is also connected to the risk of making mistakes, which can be beneficial for language learning. Littlewood (ibid.) believes that in the future an influence of one's personality on second language learning will be found. Similarly, Slobin (1993) admits that personality and one's cognitive style can substantially affect the level of the learner's language competence.

4.2 Adult Learner's Profile

In this section, attention will be turned back to the learner's motivation; however, it will not be addressed directly but it will be viewed from the opposite side of the phenomenon. The spine of this paragraph will provide a study (1988) conducted by D. Billington, who studied a mixed sex group of sixty adults aged from 37 to 48 who decided to begin doctoral studies. After the assessment of the results of her research, she abstracted seven attributes of effective learning programmes. Although her survey was not focused on language learning, we strongly believe that the characteristics of an effective programme she presented over twenty years ago is applicable to any programme, course, lecture or language class where adults are learners. Using Billington's characteristics, a brief profile of an ideal participant of such an effective course will be outlined.

The learner (participant) is a unique individual with his background and experience that is respected. He learns in a safe and encouraging environment that supports creativity and experimenting. Furthermore, the learner is treated as an equal; he is respected and appreciated. He is responsible for his own learning and he self-directs his learning. The learner is actively involved in the process of learning, not passively accepting. Moreover, the learner is intellectually stimulated and adequately challenged

providing that the rule – one step further than his actual knowledge/competence is, within the scope of the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP)* – should be followed. *ZDP* is a concept developed by the Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky, defined as the interval between the actual stage of development and the potential stage a learner can reach when being guided by an adult or collaborating with more skilled peers (Vygotsky 1978).

The adult student's profile compiled from Billington's research corresponds to a great deal to the ideas of Malcolm Knowles, who is often considered to be the father of adult learning. Knowles in his *Modern Practice of Adult Education: Pedagogy to Andragogy (1980)* introduced andragogy as a theory of teaching adults and stated four assumptions about adult learners that were in his later works refined into six. In these assumptions, he also mentions internal motivation, adult learners self-direction, the need to apply gained knowledge immediately and the power of their experience they learn from. Both Billington's and Knowles' conceptions may be thus explaining why experiential learning can be seen as an effective instrument within the scope of adult learning.

4.2.1 Meta-Cognition and Self-Control

With respect to the profile presented above, some characteristics featuring in the profile will be scrutinized in a greater detail. In the first place, it needs to be noted that several studies have shown that in order for a student to be more motivated self-control of the learning process is necessary (e.g., Skinner et al. 1998, Pintrich & Schunk 2002). Pintrich literally speaks about a trend “(...) that students who believe they have more personal control of their own learning and behavior are more likely to do well and achieve at higher levels than students who do not feel in control, such as those who are often labeled as *learned helpless*” (Pintrich 2003:673).

These recent studies support assumptions about learning that were brought into prominence a longer time ago with the advent of the cognitive approach in education,

which has brought us several principles that should be followed in teaching. It was cognitivists, who strove for more active learners in the educational process and learners that would be in the centre of the learning process. They (cognitivists) proposed that the learner should set his learning goals himself (Brooks & Brooks 1993). Nevertheless, this would only be possible for a learner who is fully aware of his learning – this again reminds of Pintrich's assertion and his learner who is in control of his learning and Knowles' assumption about self-direction.

In the second place, though, related to the previously stated, some researchers believe (e.g., Carver & Scheier 1998, Zimmerman 1990) that self-regulation of learning is the key to attaining goals. In this context, they speak about regulating one's own motivation, cognition and behaviour, which is an idea mentioned by cognitivists as well. They operated with a concept of *metacognition* (e.g. Brown, 1978). *Metacognition* was introduced in 1970s by John Flavell (1971), an American developmental psychologist, and stated briefly, defined as learners' knowledge of cognitive strategies they use and their control (Flavell 1971, 1979; Brown 1987, and other.).

We assume that one cannot exist without the other; namely, no self-direction takes place without the ability of *metacognition*; however, *metacognition* can hardly be meaningful without personal goals and self-direction. Some researchers (i.e. Svinicki 1999) claim that sadly, very few learners are competent to use metacognitive strategies. What Brown termed *metacognition*, named D. Maudsley (Mezirow:1981, 1990) in 1979 *meta-learning* and defined it as learner's competence to be aware of his habits, perception and learning, and taking control over it. It was the phenomenological approach that brought the meta level into prominence again, although using other term – *critical reflectivity*. Mezirow (ibid.) speaks about *critical reflectivity* as one's specific perception, thinking and behaviour.

Even though various, but similar terms, may have been used, there has been a clear call for learner's competence connected to his ability to reflect on his perception, thinking and learning, and to be able to control and regulate these aspects of his

personality. The strategies and skills that learners gain in the class should not be limited in their application and learners should make use of them after the classroom door closes.

4.2.2 Personal Growth

As has been already stated, adults participate in a process of continuous learning. They expect that the results of their learning will contribute to enhancing their lives and that they can profit from what they have learnt at once. In other words, their learning should be beneficial to their personal growth. In this context, Kohonen claims, “(...) the educational values and attitudes that seem to be conducive to a healthy personal growth also seem to be appropriate to the new developments in the society,” which is something we can fully identify with and which opens a space for discussion.

In the relation to one's personal growth, Rogers (1993:92) introduces the concept of *learning maps*. He believes that every human creates in his mind an imaginary map of his experiences and activities. He places himself in the centre of this map whereas experiences, activities or concepts build around this centre. The skills that the person is good at or that raise his interest are positioned close to the “self-centre” – close to the person. The further from the center the phenomena are, the more peripheral they are. Rogers supports the belief that learning is easiest among subjects close to the self-centre in comparison to the subjects on the periphery. He further argues that teaching should help reorganize this personalized map in order to bring the object of interest closer to the self-centre. Furthermore, he stresses the role of the teacher in providing such conditions in which learners can develop their skills by stating: “The role of teacher is to increase the range of experiences so that the student participants can use these new experiences to achieve their own desired learning changes.” (ibid.: 93).

5 Conclusions

The matter of adults as learners is too broad to receive a more complex treatment here; however, necessary conclusions based on the idea and the concept of experiential education as well as the matter of adult learning should be drawn in order to prepare ground for the practical part of this thesis. The experiential model of education has emerged as an alternative model of education from several sources; within this thesis, however, one concrete application of the concept is presented – *Kolb's Learning Cycle*. His model has been emphasized for Kolb framed his model around an inventory of learning styles which he then reflected in his model. *Kolb's Learning Cycle* represents an didactic instrument to help learners in their learning via a transformation of their own experience.

The model has been gaining more recognition and positive rewards within current educational perspectives; especially in andragogy (a theory of adult education developed by M. Knowles) or any kind of educational framework where an adult takes the learner's position. There are numerous reasons – some of them, in particular those interrelated with adult learner's needs and emerging demands of the modern society on the individual and the employee, have been mentioned in the previous chapters. As it is becoming increasingly important for an individual to approach learning as a life-long process of gaining knowledge, skills and attitudes, it is necessary for him to acquire a wide repertoire of techniques that would increase his awareness of his particular ways of cognition and learning, i.e., his cognitive and learning styles. Accountability for one's own learning and meta-learning skills is increasingly attended to and reflected in the current educational models.

It has been shown in the previous chapters that the aforementioned dilemmata of modern adult education are also the concerns of experiential education. A division between the adult and the child learner (supported by decades of neurological and psychological research predominantly) has also evidenced that an adult has a different start for his learning compared to a child and furthermore, he is characterized by different motivation and needs. Adults learn the most from their experience and it is one of the clear objectives of experiential education to enable adult learners to make use of their previous experience and incorporate it in their further learning. Experiential education, in language learning and teaching in particular, also supports direct experience with the language in authentic situations and favors group learning over individualized and separate learning. The ability of an individual to cooperate in a group where a colourful variety of soft skills is needed has become an unavoidable demand of the current society.

PRACTICAL PART

6 Methodological Issues

As has been foreshadowed earlier, the major goal of the practical part is to demonstrate the method of experiential teaching and learning. For this purpose, six activities that illustrate the experiential approach and that have become a part of my teacher's know-how were created. Every activity has been piloted in a class of adult students. Since the second part of this thesis stresses the practical side of the matter that has been previously researched theoretically and strictly speaks about a concrete group of learners in the piloting sections, from now on, the learner will be referred to as the student.

The activities differ in the focus and skills they practise; however, there is certainly one aspect they all have in common – their adaptability and the extent of their use. First, all activities were piloted among upper-intermediate or advanced students; however, most activities could be adapted to any level higher than elementary. In this case, the principals and the focus of the particular activity would stay the same; nevertheless, the language material that will be worked with and the students' output expected by the teacher would correspond to the level of proficiency the students have reached so far. Moreover, the language command of the students should be respected and taken into account, which means that the teacher should enable less advanced students to carry out some parts of the activity in their native language, primarily the reflection of the activity.

Second, the activities presented here function rather as various methods than activities only; every activity uses a method that can be easily applied to other topics and language phenomena than those chosen and demonstrated in this thesis (this is also

the reason why no special attention is given to variations of particular activities). Indeed, it was an intention to design such activities that would not be single topic oriented or one language phenomenon specific. On the contrary, the stress is more on the method itself and the way to apply it in almost any class with great diversity of students.

Third, most of the introduced activities have little demand on special material, classroom equipment and organization of the learning space (classroom). The activities can take place in a very formal environment of a company meeting room with a huge U-table and little room for the students to move around, they can be presented in a traditional school classroom with a blackboard and desks or they can take place outside in an informal and fresh atmosphere of a park.

6.1 Terminology and Structure

In this section, the methods used for the preparation of the following activities will be presented in a greater detail. It has already been mentioned that the aim was to present activities that would be widely applicable, that would support place, student and topic adaptability, that would not require special aids and that would show how to work with the methodology of experiential education in an ESL class of adult students. In our case, the students that participated in the piloting were almost without an exception native Czech speakers (one student was originally Slovak) and they had all been learning English as their second language.

Each activity includes several parts that will be briefly introduced; to be more specific, each activity (containing all the material related to the particular activity) can be vaguely divided into a methodological part and a piloting part. The first half involves all the material intended for the teacher to work with, the second part is related to the piloting of the activity, teacher's reflection and observation. It should be mentioned that the terminology used for presenting activities varies a great deal in available teacher's

handbooks and activity books. For the purpose and the methodology targeted in this thesis, only generally accepted methodological terminology has been used, further enriched by specific features and expressions related to experiential education. The terminology and structure presenting and describing each activity in the practical part could be used as a pattern or a model to designing other new activities. As it is one of the sub-goals of this part, the structure will be now outlined and clarified.

First, every activity is briefly introduced by a *description*. Its main purpose is to give the teacher a clear view of what the focus of the activity is and what the realization of the activity requires. The *description* should provide a sufficient image of what the activity takes and whether it is appropriate for the lesson and group of students in which it should appear. The *description* is further divided into six characteristics:

- *Focus* – shows the concerns of the activity; what will be practiced, what will be learnt
- *Level* – specifies expected language command that is necessary for the activity according to the levels given by *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*⁵ and as mentioned earlier, can be adapted to the needs of the given group of students.
- *Time* – shows the time needed for the whole activity; however, it varies in respect to the number of students and the time dedicated to the main part of the activity (e.g., rounds of the game repeated). Most activities depend fully on the teacher and the time he wants to spend with the particular activity. In these activities, time is labeled as “variable”.
- *Grouping* – shows how the students are divided during the activity (individuals, pairs, groups of X students); in experiential education, cooperation plays a great role, thus, during many activities the grouping may change.

⁵ *CEFR* is a document prepared by the Council of Europe that provides a tool to set clear standards in stages of learning and their assessment. (CEFR. In Wikipedia. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages. April 23, 2012).

- *Preparation* – lists all material, worksheets or aids that will be needed for the activity.
- *Aims* – this characteristics was one of the most ambiguous because of the perception of the aim as a didactic result of teaching because it substantially varies from approach to approach, from teacher from teacher.

In this text, aims are meant as the targets of each activity which does not primarily describe what is happening during the activity but rather what the content of the activity is intended for. Furthermore, aims described the way done here are rather vague; however, it is expected from the teacher to transform these broad and vague aims into concrete objectives of the particular activity: What exactly is the change that takes place in the student after the activity? It was one of the goals of the practical part to maintain the descriptions of the activities simple and well-organized. Not only for this purpose each activity includes not more than three aims of which, next to language aims, at least one aim focuses on meta-cognitive or meta-linguistic skills.

Secondly, every *Description* is followed by *Teacher's notes* which involve all information and material teacher needs for facilitating the activity. This part is further divided into the task *Procedure* where the exact steps the teacher should take are described – the language style used here transforms a great deal since it is used for giving instructions. The instructions have three separate sections depending on the time when it takes place.

The first section is called *Before the activity* and it involves everything that should take place until the activity itself starts. In this part the teacher prepares the material, the classroom and the students, who are explained what will be happening and what their task will be. A key part of this section is motivation. In several activities at least several lines are dealing with the question of students' motivation which is considered highly relevant in any work with students, adult especially. The motivating part contributes to establishing a creative and supportive atmosphere, helps students to

see the benefits of the activity (why the students should take part in it); moreover, its purpose is also to attract students' attention or raise their interest.

The second, middle section, explains what the teacher and the students do *During the activity*; i.e., prescribes their expected behaviour. Teacher's role is generally facilitating as has been scrutinized in the theoretical part. On the other hand, the students' role is experiential. During this middle part, students are basically collecting experience that would provide the material for their learning whereas the teacher is observing with little interruptions only.

The last section, *After the activity*, was the most difficult one to define for several reasons: when applying experiential methods it appeared arguable where the end of the activity is. This may be illustrated by a much clearer example of the game Bingo. Explaining the rules and preparing Bingo charts would fall into *Before the activity* section, the game itself would be *During the activity* and announcing the results of the game, answering questions or making any further use of the game would certainly belong to the *After the activity* section. However, in activities where experience plays a significant part, the most important phase probably comes after the activity has finished, and that is the reflection where the experience is transformed into new knowledge or skill and where most of the learning takes place. This was one of the reasons that decided about the following division of what the content of sections *During the activity* and *After the activity* is. *During the activity* describes everything that takes place while the activity is happening and also what directly follows in some cases; e.g., announcing the winner (in case of games), announcing the results of the activity or presenting students output (the task they have worked on).

On the other hand, the *After the activity* section focuses on reflecting the experience and transforming it into material students can learn from. In this section, the previously stated objectives of the activity should arise (if they did not arise during the activity) and the goals of the activity should be finally fulfilled. Furthermore, the last section deals with what was in the practical part defined as reflection. The reflection

takes different forms and it is usually supplemented by questions helping the students realize what has happened during the activity and what they were personally doing. In all cases, the questions are only suggestions that should change according to every different group of students. Next to that, the reflection should always be structured and for this reason the questions are structured as well: the first part reflects on students' feelings; the second part helps them realize what has taken place, how they acted; the last part deals with the transformation of their experience, tries to find parallels with real life situations, helps them realize the weak points and tries to find ways how the students could get better in particular respects. A basic rule of asking open questions rather than closed is favoured here.

The last part of *Teacher's notes* is any special printed material that the teacher needs for the activity. This mostly involves material to be copied and used in the classroom. In addition, some activities require student's *worksheet* to be copied and handed out. The master copy can be found as the fourth part of the activity pack.

The final part (*Piloting*) does not truly belong to the activity pack but it has been added for a better orientation of the reader. It describes the direct experience of the author of this text with the *piloting* of the designed activities in a group of adult English language students. Next, section, *Observation* contains comments of the piloting teacher, *Evidence of learning* that attempts to present evidence of students' learning and mentions some interesting viewpoints and comments the students mentioned in their reflection and the last is *Teacher's evaluation* of the activity, where its benefits for the teacher and the student as well as its weak points are discussed. For this last section, another change in writing style takes place when the author of this text describes her personal experience from the piloting; for this reason the text is conducted in the more subjective first person.

To summarize briefly, each activity in the practical part is in a pack which contains material for the teacher (the *description* of the activity, the *procedure* – *before*, *during* and *after the activity*, copyable material), material for the students (*worksheets*)

and records from the piloting (class background, observation, evidence of students' learning and teacher's evaluation). Not all these parts have to be included in the pack and neither the ordering nor the focus of the activities has a major function; being precise, the activities are ordered alphabetically and their selection depended mainly on their variability.

6.2 Activity Criteria

Before a brief description of the background of the students, the criteria of the selected activities should be mentioned. It has previously been stated that all the activities were born of my experience of a teacher and a learner at the same time, have become a part of my teacher's know-how and were based on various methods and activities I have tested. All of the activities were designed for an adult student (for specifics of the adult student see chapter 4) exclusively and other criteria that were followed will be listed in the next lines.

Each activity:

- is manageable in 45 minutes or less
- has little demands on room, aids and material needed
- is adaptable to lower or higher levels of language proficiency
- has variable aims that can be easily transformed
- uses elements of experiential education
- focuses on the student as the centre of the educational process
- attempts at presenting both language and meta-language or meta-cognitive skills
- is practical and based on using authentic language
- expects no previous home preparation from the student

6.3 Class Background

The activities were piloted in a group of eight Czech students between the age of 23 and 47. All of them were employed in the same company and their proficiency level was either advanced or upper-intermediate (four upper-intermediate, one advanced and three students very close to the advanced level). The language background of each student differed a great deal; however, most of them used English regularly at work and some of them had lived in an English-speaking country. I have worked with the group for several months and there has always been a nice and friendly atmosphere.

7 Activities

7.1 Gladiator Ring

Activity Description

Focus	Discussions over controversial topics, argumentation
Level	Upper intermediate – advanced
Time	Variable (minimum 30 minutes)
Grouping	Discussions in pairs, reflection partly individual, partly collective
Preparation	A set of numbered controversial topics, a chart with the order of the speakers, large sheets of paper and markers for reflection
Aims	Students will test their fluency and readiness in English Students will reflect on their ability to convey a discussion in English Students will reflect on some possible speaking techniques/strategies

7.1.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) Prepare a list with numbers written in a column. The highest number should correspond to the number of students in the class. Invite each student to pick any of the

numbers on the list and write his name next to the number chosen. Each student should be allotted one number.

2) For this activity its trouble-free start and students motivation is absolutely necessary. It is highly recommended to motivate your students by a short prologue to the game:

Welcome to our Gladiator Game. Today the best known masters of discourse will clash and show their power in the ultimate battle of language and nerves. They will prove their ability to react quickly, argue, and persuade the spectators that they are the best. The spectators will vote and the best one will become the winner of the battle. Etc.

3) Explain the rules of the battle: There are always two speakers in the ring, who are given a controversial statement to discuss. Their goal is to argue and convince the spectators about their rhetorical skills. One of the speakers is a supporter of the statement, the other one is an opponent. The supporter is chosen by a referee (teacher) and he starts the game. Speakers can decide for the number of the topic they want to talk about; however, the topic itself stays secret until the battle starts.

There are three rounds for every pair of speakers. The first round takes 4 minutes and starts directly after the teacher has said aloud the topic to be discussed. The speaker that supports the point of view demonstrated by the first statement should start presenting his opinions immediately. He has exactly 2 minutes to raise his arguments. After his 2 minutes have been over, the opponent has 2 minutes to disapprove of his rival's arguments and win the favour of the spectators. The first round finishes after 4 minutes. The second round takes only 60 minutes and each speaker has only 30 seconds to react on the other speaker or bring into the discussion some counter-arguments. The final round lasts mere 20 seconds of which each speaker i introduces a simple sentence or a motto n 10 seconds to gain more respect from the spectators.

After three rounds each spectator writes the name of the better speaker on a piece of paper which he hands over to the referee (teacher) who gives one point to the one who has gained more votes. Each of the speakers will encounter three different topics and three different rivals. The order of the pairs will be announced on the blackboard/flip chart.

4) After having explained the rules, sum up the key principles of the game, write the order of pairs on the blackboard and ensure your students that they are not necessarily going to present their own views on the topic. Make sure all their questions have been answered.

5) The game can start. Ask the first pair to sit in a place where everyone can see and hear them well. Encourage them to choose the number of the topic and read the statement aloud.

During the activity:

6) Check the time and announce the start of every new round. Read the statement to discuss for every pair of students. Encourage the class to vote for one of the students after three rounds. Record the points given.

7) During the whole game, monitor students behaviour, their communicative strategies, mistakes, etc. This will be a rich source for the following reflection.

8) After all pairs have spoken, close the game and announce the winner. The winner should be rewarded by a proper applause from the whole class at least.

After the activity:

9) Open a debate about what has happened and create an atmosphere where your students can share their experience and observations. The first questions should focus on how the students felt and whether there were any problems during the game. The next part of the questions should focus on the procedure itself; i.e., what the students were doing during their time in the ring. The third part of the questions should stress

what they have learnt from their experience, what they found useful and how they could change their behaviour in order to be more successful next time.

Suggested questions:

How do you feel after the game?

How did you feel when you were in the ring?

How did you deal with the fact that you had to present arguments you didn't identify with?

What surprised you in the first round?

Did your approach/strategy change after the first round?

Which strategies did you use to fill in the time?

How did you prepare for your "speech"?

What helped you in finding arguments/counter-arguments?

How did you win the attention of the spectators?

Which techniques you used worked/didn't work?

If you participate in such a discussion next time, how will you improve your strategy?

In which real-life situations do you need the skills you used in the battle?

10) The second part of reflection should contain a brain-storming in groups of four, in which the students discuss concrete skills and techniques they used or might have used during the game. Ask students to make groups of four, provide a large piece of paper and markers for each group. Ask each group to write their essential comments on the paper.

11) Meanwhile their group discussion, monitor the situation and ask open questions that may provide a good starting point and help your students find the answers they have been looking for.

12) After the reflection, the ideas collected by the groups can be displayed in the class or rewritten into a document and sent to all participants after the class.

Teacher's Sheet: Topics to Discuss

- 1) GAY COUPLES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ADOPT CHILDREN.**
- 2) TORTURE IS ACCEPTABLE UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.**
- 3) PEOPLE WHO DON'T PROTECT THEIR HEALTH ENOUGH (E.G. SMOKERS) SHOULD BE PENALIZED BY PAYING HIGHER HEALTH INSURANCE.**
- 4) WITHOUT DEBATE, WOMEN ARE WORSE MANAGERS THAN MEN.**
- 5) A YEAR IN THE ARMY SHOULD BE OBLIGATORY FOR EVERY HEALTHY MAN.**
- 6) ALL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SHOULD PAY FEES FOR THEIR STUDIES.**
- 7) MARRIAGE IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF ANY GOOD RELATIONSHIP.**
- 8) RELIGION HAS NO POINT IN THE MODERN SOCIETY.**
- 9) VEGETARIANISM IS JUST A MATTER OF FASHION.**
- 10) THERE ISN'T ANY MEDIA ONE COULD TRUST. RADIO, TELEVISION, INTERNET – THEY ARE ALL LIARS.**
- 11) THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL STEREOTYPES IS REAL AND TRUE.**
- 12) PEOPLE WITHOUT BASIC EDUCATION SHOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE.**
- 13) SCHOOLS SHOULD HELP AND SUPPORT STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREERS.**
- 14) IMMIGRATION BRINGS NOTHING GOOD BUT TROUBLES.**
- 15) ORGANIC (BIO) FOOD IS JUST ANOTHER TRICK OF PRODUCERS AND SUPERMARKETS, WHICH ARE EAGER TO GAIN MORE MONEY.**
- 16) PEOPLE WHO APPEAR IN TOP POLITICS CAN HARDLY COME WITH NOBLE INTENTIONS.**

7.1.2 Piloting

Observation

After the introduction of the activity, some of the students looked concerned but they enjoyed my introduction so that the game started without any difficulties. The first pair of students had a difficult position because they were the ones to first realize how difficult a two-minute dialogue about a topic they did not know much about can be tough; especially, when they had to represent the other side of the argument they did not identify with. The first students had troubles using effectively all of their two-minute time and I was forced to let them know how much time they have left which made some of them look very unhappy. This problem was slowly disappearing with every following round since my students were more circumspect about economic use of their arguments. During the pair discussions and argumentation, sometimes a student had problem recalling or finding the right word for something quite specific. For this reason, I found useful to write these expressions down so that we could return to them later.

After the discussion, the students shared their experience from the game. I tried not to present my personal views very often but rather asked the other students to help with the unknown words. I assume that my students enjoyed the activity and it helped them see more objectively what their weak spots in such type of a discussion might be. One student realized that she generally speaks too fast, another student admitted his lack of more specialized words to express precisely what he wanted to communicate. In the brainstorming part, not all students knew what was meant by communicative strategies in the game and I had to add more supplementing questions so that everyone could clearly understand what was expected from him. Some of the students did not think of any strategy or plan during the game at all and more or less successfully used the trial by error method. Others, on the contrary, had several inspiring remarks on how to proceed in such a game.

Evidence of Students' Learning

In this section, some of the students' remarks that were mentioned during the first part of the reflection will be listed:

- ⤴ I have never realized that two minutes can be this long.
- ⤴ I always needed some word which I couldn't find. That was so annoying..
- ⤴ It was very difficult for me to find arguments for something I didn't agree with.
- ⤴ My argumentation was so persuasive that I'm thinking of changing my opinion on the matter now.
- ⤴ Being a spectator was a lot of fun and I could evaluate how successfully the others argued.
- ⤴ My plan was simple: to find a good argument and add more and more details later.
- ⤴ Now I know what are all the phrases, such as “I cannot completely agree” or “In my humble opinion” good for.

This is a compilation of some tips my students gathered in their brain-storming groups. It is not by accident that some of the comments may contradict. They display conclusions that drew different groups of students with diverse personal experience.

- ⤴ Two minutes can be desperately long, but ten seconds are actually very short.
- ⤴ It is good to use all those opinion expressing phrases (such as, In my personal view, I can't completely agree, etc.) and linking words. It helps you kill some time and at the same time you can save it for thinking about what you want to say.
- ⤴ One strong argument twisting the discussion is better than ten arguments which you can't support properly.
- ⤴ It is better to have more arguments because if you present just one, it can be easy for the opponent to put it down, and you lose.
- ⤴ Speak slowly!
- ⤴ If you don't know some word, describe it or forget it.
- ⤴ Funny motto can persuade many spectators to give you a vote.

Teacher's Evaluation

I found the activity very useful for practicing fluency and overcoming personal fear of speaking in front of other people. The same, but modified, activity could be also used for practising specialized vocabulary or phrases if students were pre-taught vocabulary related to the topic discussed; for instance, the topic for the Gladiator Ring would be “University education should be paid” and before the activity would start, students would learn expressions, such as the Ministry of Education, fees, entrance exams, assessment, etc. (depending on the proficiency level of the students).

In my class, some students had troubles understanding what was meant by speaking or communicative strategies. First, some of them obviously did not consciously follow any strategy just spoke until their time was over; second, other chose a particular procedure or strategy but were not able to describe it. For this reason, it was necessary to share emotions first (“I freaked out when you said the topic was organic food – I absolutely don't know anything about organic food!”, “I was quite happy I didn't have to speak first.”) and build the reflection on it. Emotions can be a great starting point that helps your students realize that there was a challenge they had to deal with, they succeeded; yet, another challenge was to evaluate how successfully they dealt with the tasks.

I believe that the activity has also enhanced confidence of some students in the group. Next time, the same activity could be focused on different skills and topics than communicative strategies. It could be easily used to teach rules for good argumentation as well since in our case the ethical dimension of the discussion was completely ignored. Other application would be a topic-based discussion in which the students would be given expressions that they would have use in their speech.

To sum this all up, the activity is skill-based and targets at student's ability to use the language in a real situation. The participants are exposed to situations for which they cannot prepare, they have to react spontaneously and be better than their rival. This

situation might be quite stressful for some students but in reality, we are regularly exposed to such situations. The students can test themselves in a secure and well-known environment. They may gain more confidence because they have to discuss in front of the teacher (which is something they are used to) but also in front of the rest of the class. After the game, the students should share their feelings and discuss what they have learnt from their experience. The focus is on strategies and tips how to deal with concrete difficulties.

7.2 What We Know About ...

Activity Description

Focus	Past tenses, discussion, describing a problem
Level	Lower intermediate – advanced
Time	Minimum 20 minutes
Grouping	Groups of 3/4
Preparation	Large piece of paper for every group, coloured markers
Aims	Students will organize and review their existing knowledge about past tenses Students will complete missing/clarify knowledge of the past tenses Students will acquire particular skills to analyze a problem/topic

7.2.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) Divide your students in groups of four. Give each group a large piece of paper and several coloured markers.
- 2) Explain your students that in the following minutes they should create an overview of the past tenses that would be useful for any student seeking information about the past tenses. Let them know that they are expected to collaborate and present a well arranged overview of their knowledge in which they make use of everything they have learnt about the phenomenon so far.
- 3) Ask them to note down every question related to the topic that arises during their work.

During the activity:

- 4) Monitor the whole process. Be particularly sensitive to each student's personal contributions, their ability to cooperate and reasoning skills. During their work on the assignment, observe how your students reason, proceed and deal with the task.
- 5) After your students have completed the task, ask one of them to present their work and encourage the others to interrupt and mention doubts and difficulties they were dealing with.

After the activity:

- 6) When the presentations have been over, attend to all linguistic questions your students have. Support correct answers given by other students. If no solution is found, provide some yourself and clarify everything that was unclear.
- 7) Reflect on the whole activity: focus on emotions first, then on the process itself, eventually, on what your students have gained from the activity. Don't forget to pay attention to problems the students met while working on the task.

Suggested questions:

How difficult/easy the task was for you?

How well did you perform the task?

How did you proceed in dealing with the task?

What did you struggle with?

How did you solve these difficulties?

What was your contribution to the task?

What would have helped you in performing the task?

If you were to do the same task again, which procedure would you choose?

How would you make your team work more effective next time?

Where else in your life can you use the methods you used?

7.2.2 Piloting

Observation

After having given the instructions to the task and dividing my students into groups of four, my students naturally switched to Czech and during the whole activity were mixing it together with English. I did not interrupt them as I did not consider that endangering the objectives of the activity. At first, there was no clear system of working at all. One of them took a green marker and started to draw something reminding of a time line but later has given up on it since the students could not all agree on what should be on the time line. Nevertheless, almost immediately, they managed to write down the four English past tenses: the past simple/continuous and past perfect simple/continuous which opened the doors to a discussion about their difference and use. One of the students had no problems explaining what the form of the verb in a particular tense shall be although there was a long debate over the past perfect simple and continuous concerning the correct form of the verb “to be”. The debate was put to an end when another student said that the teacher taught them that tenses were always systematic and symmetrically organized.

The next 10 minutes were spend on searching for an example illustrating each tense and trying to explain its use. The past simple and the past continuous did not represent any trouble even though two students confessed their inability to use them in practice. The past perfect simple and continuous, on the other hand, appeared rather intricate from the first time. Only one of the students was able to use them in a sentence and explain their use as well; nevertheless, she showed a serious doubt in her face about that. At this point, some of the other students seemed quite desperate realizing how little they know about a matter they have already learnt. One of the students mentioned that the past tenses are also used in conditionals (but could not find any examples) and another one just sketched the principles of reported speech (but did not know the term “reported speech” and was not sure how the form of the verb in reported speech should change).

After the students have presented their tense overview, my major objective was to clarify ambiguities and attend to all questions; though, I did not intend to give the answers myself but rather supported my students in seeking the right solutions on their own while sharing their personal knowledge. Indeed, most of the answers were found thus my contribution shrunk to refining inaccuracies. Firstly, my students seemed surprised by the fact that I had no intention finding answers for their questions; later, they managed to solve most questions by cooperation with the support of my leading questions.

While reflecting, at least four students have considered the task quite difficult and admitted lacking knowledge when comparing particular types. Most students admitted their deficient skills in applying their knowledge of theory on practical cases of use. Furthermore, this activity has shown better than any test that more time needs to be spent on practising the past tenses and my students themselves asked me for more practise of the topic.

Teacher's Evaluation

To be honest, the reason to choose this particular activity was to review past tenses we had spoken about in some of the previous lessons. The activity has shown several facts that will be dealt with here and that have emerged in other activities as well. First, the way the activity was set eased organizing all existing students' knowledge about the topic and discovering any weak spots in application of actually known rules. The same activity or method would be felicitous for eliciting preconceptions about the matter; for example, the teacher would discover what the students have already learnt and it would be much effective to build the new information on that. In our case, the activity was an instrument of formative assessment⁶ so that I as the teacher could see the measure of understanding of the matter. It has shown that more time spent on the topic will be needed; moreover, this urge was initiated by my students themselves, not me.

⁶ Formative assessment involves wide range of tools for assessing procedures used in the classroom to give information about the present student's understanding and his progress both to the teacher and to the student. Formative assessment should be perceived as practice (Garrison & Ehringhaus 2007).

Second, this activity has shown how much is traditional teacher-centred approach embedded in our minds. I literally saw my students struggling with the fact that there was a teacher present in the class who refused correcting students during their work on the given task. Initially, I was expected to give the right answer in case of their disagreement and every doubt they had was accompanied by their heads turning in my direction; however, when they learnt that no help of this kind will come from my side, they focused more on finding the right information within the group. The fact that I as a teacher liberated myself from my responsibility for the students' outcome and correctness lead into them being more responsible and cooperative within the group.

Third, it was apparent that accepted with great difficulties that there were no hard and fast in advance given answers that would have been expected from them. This resulted in their temporary confusion when they were supposed to create a set of specific rules to follow when speaking; nonetheless, this confusion was conquered when I clearly manifested that the rules should be a product of their personal experience; i.e., which strategies have proved successful and useful to follow and which has not.

To conclude, this activity/method proved effective to expose preconceptions, knowledge and its lack about the topic. It was, moreover, evidence revealing the degree to which my students were dependable on their teacher and how they were used to rely on her responsibility. The strong point of this activity lies in its potential to confront students with their deficiency of knowledge in the particular area; though, without teacher's intervention or feedback. If the same activity was used again, clearer instructions about the information related to the topic they should gather would be necessary. This would support their more structured reasoning about the matter from the very beginning and it would help them see what knowledge or skills they lack.

7.3 Ten Words Every Day

Activity Description

Focus	Vocabulary extension
Level	Elementary – advanced
Time	Minimum 25 minutes
Grouping	Pairs or individuals
Preparation	Worksheet for each student, list of words to be learnt by the next lesson for each student, several Czech-English dictionaries, blackboard
Aims	Students will extend their vocabulary Students will apply some strategies of learning new words Students will evaluate the efficiency of various learning strategies

7.3.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) Divide students into pairs. Each pair should have/receive a Czech-English dictionary (providing that the students are Czech).
- 2) Tell your students to have a look around and write first ten words which spring to their mind and which they would like to know/learn in English. Ten words for each pair of students. Stress that the words can be out of any word class providing that they know what the differences between various word classes are. Their selection should not take them more than 5 minutes.

During the activity:

- 3) Next, ask your students to write the words down and find their translations in the dictionary. Do not forget to see if their translation really corresponds to the word the student was looking for; dictionaries can be very misleading sometimes.
- 4) In the following time, inform your students that they have 5 minutes to learn the words perfectly, pronunciation and spelling included. Stress that they should be able to remember the words for more than just several minutes.
- 5) After the 5 minutes have been over, collect the lists of words from every pair and explain that the second part of the activity will focus on the process of learning new words and that they can test their learning skills in this area, too.
- 6) Divide the pairs in several groups so that the original pairs would split and let them discuss the strategies they used when learning for about 5 minutes. Interesting ideas can be written on the blackboard.
- 7) After the discussion, let your students demonstrate what they have learnt on the blackboard. Ask always one student to come to the blackboard to write, pronounce aloud and translate those ten words one by one.
- 8) When the student has finished, invite the other student from the pair to correct mistakes and mark them on the blackboard. If none of the students can correct the mistake, provide the right answer yourself.

After the activity:

- 9) You can briefly ask your students how they felt about the activity, if there was anything surprising and if their newly gained experience is similar to their previous experience with learning new vocabulary or not. The students can also briefly consider how efficient was the method they chose.

10) Then, demonstrate your students how to draw a T-Chart⁷ (see Figure 7.3.1) on a piece of paper in the original pairs and ask them to consider for a short time the positive and negative aspects of the method they selected when learning the new words.

11) Tell your students that between eight to twelve words (exactly the same number they tried to remember at first) is the ideal number of words to learn every day. You can encourage your students to count how many words they can learn in a year if they maintain this pace.

12) Explain your students that some basic strategies of learning new vocabulary are demonstrated on a worksheet they will be given.

13) Give each student the same list of words they should learn by the next lesson. The list should contain about ten words for each day left until the next lesson. It is recommended to choose words that are related to a new matter or topic you plan to introduce in the next lesson. Explain your students that they can use any of the strategies on the worksheet. For less advanced students provide translation/or a simplified version of the worksheet. In the next lesson, your students will test how successful they were in their learning and how effective the examined strategies have proved.

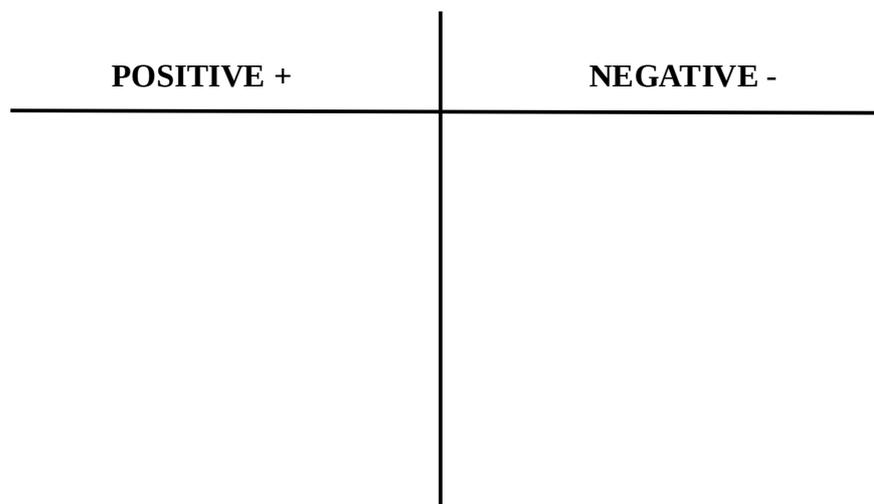


Figure 7.3.1: T-Chart

⁷ T-Chart is a method developed by *The Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking* project that provides a framework for restructuring contemporary school. The method is an organizing tool for considering two different sides of a single topic; e.g., pros and cons .

7.3.2 Student's Worksheet

Four Memory Techniques

Make it personal	
<p>Humans have been designed to forget information that has no relevance to them. It is natural that you can't memorize words that have nothing to do with you. The best way to break this curse is to simply make the words more personal. You can use them in a sentence which describes something related to your life or you can define the word in your own words: for instance, "witch" can be the mean lady from the first floor.</p>	
It sounds like	Visualize it
<p>Long and difficult words will remember easier when you imagine how they sound like. Every word certainly sounds like something you know very well or it can rhyme with it. The more expressive, the better. "Witch" reminds of "bitch" and "resolution" sounds almost like "revolution".</p>	<p>Create a visual image of the word you want to learn – you will easily remember it. The image should be either personal or exaggerated. Imagine a "witch" with an extremely big wart on her nose and a huge black hissing cat on her shoulder. For "old-fashioned", visualize yourself driving a car from 1960s.</p>
The Roman Room	
<p>This is a very old technique to remember information with no structure, such as vocabulary. It is based on associating new information (e.g. vocabulary) with some information you know very well. Imagine yourself walking through a room/flat you know well and visualize an associate word to the word you want to remember. There are no rules for association. Let's say you want to remember "witch", "old-fashioned" and "truth". Truth can be associated with the mirror hanging in you hallway because it tells you the truth. Witch would be the shaggy plant looking like witch's hair and old-fashioned will be represented by your kettle because it is a very old kettle after your mother.</p>	

7.3.3 Piloting

Observation

The basic instructions to the task have been introduced; however, there were two distinct factors affecting the following process: one was related to the learning environment and the other was influenced by the level of students' proficiency. It was none of my intentions to restrict my students' imagination and creativity and thus my students could a list of any words; however, the two aforementioned factors got seriously involved in the creative process of searching for some new words. On one hand, the environment in the classroom was far from stimulating – a small room of sixteen square metres, a desk and a flip chart as its only equipment, with the teacher and other students as the only available view. On the other, it has to be taken into account that all students have reached the upper intermediate level and that is why finding new unknown vocabulary was not as easy as I anticipated, which means that this part of the activity has taken more time than was expected.

The second part of the activity, in which my students were learning the vocabulary that they have chosen, seemed much easier for them despite the fact that in most cases, they were not much inventive in choosing methods of learning the new vocabulary. Although, one pair was, on the contrary, surprisingly creative and considered other more interesting methods of learning new words than the traditional method of repetition and drilling. One pair divided the words into several categories according to their logical relation and tried remembering separate groups. Most pairs did not truly work in pairs but found it easier to work individually.

After the students have turned in their vocabulary lists, the second part of the activity arrived: the students were divided into different groups and discussed the methods they have chosen. Many students confessed that they just “read the list over and over until they memorized the words”; however, some of these students also stated that they could remember the words as a list but were “not sure if they would be able to use them separately in concrete sentences”.

For many students, the part in which they were expected to present their knowledge of the new vocabulary was quite astonishing since I always read one word of their list; however, in a different order than it was on their original list. Many students had troubles recollecting abstract words, other than noun words, words either too short or long, and expressions with more than one meaning. I did not make any conclusions or judgments about the efficiency of various methods but wanted to see which method my students probably use at home and I wanted them to consider their pros and cons. Some students seemed to be happy about the existence of other methods to remember new vocabulary and consciously spent the time at home applying them when learning new vocabulary.

Evidence of Students' Learning

In this section, several inspiring remarks bringing evidence of my students' progressive understanding of the functioning of their memory will be mentioned. All remarks were the result of their discussions.

- ♣ I tried to repeat the words many times, then waited for a short time, and again but after some time, I recalled only 3 or 4 words.
- ♣ I think that you should imagine the thing you want to remember. If you want to remember “octopus”, you have to see it. The problem is that most words like integrity or development I use at work are difficult to imagine.
- ♣ We must have chosen too difficult words. I remembered the first five from the list and then the last one. In the middle there was a big I-don't-remember gap.
- ♣ When you (teacher) said the word, I tried to look around again and find the original thing. This worked for me because I remembered almost everything.

Teacher's Evaluation

Creating and piloting this activity was motivated by a discovery I made when gaining experience in teaching adults. I realized that very few of my students spend time learning new vocabulary regularly. Most of my students spend no time with the development of their personal word-stocks and the only chance for them to learn new

words was during our lessons. However, most of my students were used to open their notes before coming to class to read the words they put down in the previous lesson.

It has been stated in the theoretical part that each person is unique in the way he acquires new information and it has also been demonstrated that there are different types of learning styles, which are characterized by preferred way of processing new information. The piloting of this activity has shown that the vast majority of my students uses only one method to learn new vocabulary and that is traditional drilling; meaning, reading over and over until the word gets caught in the net. There is another problem lying here: in fact, most adult learners cannot spend so much time drilling new vocabulary on a daily basis and thus never store the new words in their long-term memory. Due to this common practice, I decided to create a room for my students, where they could assess the effectiveness of the method they routinely use to learn new vocabulary and where, in addition, they could get acquainted with other methods.

I consider the piloting successful; yet, with several reservations that will be discussed further. The first problem was connected to the difficulty of finding ten unknown words to be translated. I have already described what might have been its cause earlier; nevertheless, more factors certainly stepped in, such as the fact that my students often struggle with keeping attention and concentration in the classes. For the lesson they mostly leave their desk to walk three minutes to another room or, at most, to another floor, and the whole lesson is frequently characterized by their constant mobile phone checking under the threat that they can be called back to their duty at any moment. To sum up, it was also a lack of attention that contributed to the tentative beginning of the activity. On the grounds of this experience, next time, I would modify the task instructions so that the words would be related to a specific area of students' interests, particular topic or an article to be read. This may help easier access to new words to remember in a group of nearly proficient learners.

The second difficulty was caused by dividing my students into pairs without taking into account their possible preference of individual learning, which led into a situation that was briefly outlined in the observation part; specifically, a division of some pairs where the students did not cooperate on the task but rather memorized the new words on their own. In this case, I would suggest either changing the focus of the activity on cooperation which necessarily means transformation of some parts of the activity or maintaining the original focus of learning new vocabulary that would not be further burdened by attempts to cooperate if students did not find cooperation more natural. Too many objectives may easily result into disintegration of the activity and confusion of the learner.

7.4 Who's Calling?

Activity Description

Focus	Phone conversations, fixed phrases, role-play, fluency
Level	Lower intermediate – advanced
Time	Variable (minimum 15 minutes)
Grouping	Collective (two students speak at a time)
Preparation	Card/cards with details of the phone calls Stickers with numbers (the highest number corresponds to the number of students in the classroom), mobile phones (optional)
Aims	Students will use fixed phrases in real conversations Students will perform several improvised conversations Students will create their own dialogues

7.4.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) Make sure your students are seated in such an order so that each of them can keep eye-contact with all the other students.
- 2) Give each student a sticker with a number written on in (starting with 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) – the highest number should correspond to the number of students in the classroom – and ask them to put their mobile phones on the desk if they have them with.
- 3) You can announce a game (if games have proved successful with your students); otherwise, the activity can be presented as real-life situations practice. To create inspiring atmosphere, you can ask your students if they have seen any improvisation

games, for instance on TV, and if they know the game where one person is calling to another one (maybe somebody has watched some improvisational TV show, such as *Whose Line is it Anyway?* or its Czech variety *Partička*).

4) Instruct your students that they have been given cards with various social situations or problems to solve but they can read them only after their time comes. Their task is to make a (fictitious) call to the person written on the card and deal with the suggested problem. The student with number one on his sticker starts. He flips his card over, quickly reads the situation and calls number two. When their dialogue has finished, the student with number two flips his card over and calls number three to start another phone call.

5) You can modify the rules according to the particular group or level of your students. Lower levels can, for instance, use their notes or text books.

During the activity:

6) Make sure the activity is running smooth, clarify information written on the cards if needed. Monitor the students, record interesting dialogues and comments.

7) After some time, you can vary the activity and ask your students to mingle their numbers or to change the direction of calling.

After the activity:

9) Quickly find out how your students enjoyed the activity.

10) Discuss interesting comments you wrote during the activity with the students (they can correct mistakes together, etc.).

11) Optional: Split the class into pairs and ask them to write a model dialogue for that situation or social event. After they have finished, check correctness of the text.

12) Ask the pairs to exchange their dialogues. Every dialogue should be presented/performed in front of the other students.

Teacher's Sheet: Activity Cards

<p>You are: PATIENT</p> <p>Calling to: YOUR DOCTOR</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT</p>	<p>You are: MOTHER/FATHER</p> <p>Calling to: YOUR CHILD</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO CHECK IF HE/SHE IS ALL RIGHT</p>
<p>You are: STUDENT</p> <p>Calling to: YOUR TEACHER</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO CANCEL A LESSON</p>	<p>You are: CLIENT</p> <p>Calling to: BANK</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO ASK ABOUT THEIR ACCOUNT SERVICES</p>
<p>You are: MAN/WOMAN</p> <p>Calling to: HOSPITAL</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO FIND OUT WHEN AND WHERE YOU CAN VISIT YOUR SICK GRANDMOTHER</p>	<p>You are: JOB APPLICANT</p> <p>Calling to: COMPANY</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE JOB YOU ARE APPLYING FOR</p>
<p>You are: EMPLOYEE</p> <p>Calling to: YOUR EMPLOYER</p> <p>Because: YOU ARE SICK AND NEED TWO DAYS OFF</p>	<p>You are: WIFE/HUSBAND</p> <p>Calling to: YOU HUSBAND/WIFE</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO GO FOR LUNCH TOGETHER</p>
<p>You are: REAL ESTATE AGENT</p> <p>Calling to: CLIENT</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO KNOW THE DETAILS ABOUT THE FLAT HE/SHE IS SELLING</p>	<p>You are: SISTER/BROTHER</p> <p>Calling to: BROTHER/SISTER</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO CONGRATULATE HIM/HER ON HIS/HER JOB PROMOTION</p>

<p>You are: YOUNG MAN</p> <p>Calling to: YOUNG LADY</p> <p>Because: YOU ARE VERY SHY BUT YOU WANT TO ASK HER OUT</p>	<p>You are: CUSTOMER</p> <p>Calling to: PLUMBER</p> <p>Because: TO SOLVE A PROBLEM YOU HAVE IN YOUR BATHROOM</p>
<p>You are: SUPERVISOR</p> <p>Calling to: HIS/HER SUBORDINATE</p> <p>Because: HE/SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN A MEETING RIGHT NOW</p>	<p>You are: MAN/WOMAN</p> <p>Calling to: POST OFFICE</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO ASK ABOUT A DELIVERY YOU SHOULD HAVE RECIEVED A WEEK AGO</p>
<p>You are: TENANT</p> <p>Calling to: CARETAKER</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO REPORT A BROKEN BELL</p>	<p>You are: LODGER</p> <p>Calling to: HIS/HER TENANT</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO INFORM HIM/HER ABOUT HIGHER RENT</p>
<p>You are: CHILD</p> <p>Calling to: YOUR PARENT</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO CONFESS ABOUT BAD TEST RESULTS</p>	<p>You are: MAGAZINE EDITOR</p> <p>Calling to: FAMOUS PERSON</p> <p>Because: YOU WANT TO MAKE A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH HIM/HER</p>
<p>You are:</p> <p>Calling to:</p> <p>Because:</p>	<p>You are:</p> <p>Calling to:</p> <p>Because:</p>

7.4.2 Piloting

Observation

When I told my students that we would improvise phone calls, they looked quite enthusiastic about that. Each of them got two cards, which meant that they should call two other students. Generally, my students had no problem talking and they made the situations more interesting than their original assignment was since they, mostly very advanced learners, did not lack required skills. It was also one of my objectives to encourage them to improve the original description of the situation. The activity was running smooth; my students did not need me, indeed. There was a little misunderstanding about who is calling to whom sometimes but later on the students learnt that they have to say clearly who is on the phone so that the one on the other side could be engaged into the conversation. There were not many matters I needed to comment. Before the end of the activity, I decided to upgrade it and for the last round each student could create his own situation and call anyone he wanted.

The second part of the activity was not as exciting as the first one and my students were rather lazy to write the dialogues. The dialogues they created were rewritten and used in the next class as a gap filling exercise.

Teacher's Evaluation

This activity focused mainly on fluency and it has shown that my students are fully fluent (with few exceptions). Although I considered the task rather trivial for them, they really enjoyed playing the game and they had much fun. Nevertheless, the second task they were given after the activity (writing dialogues in pairs) showed too simple and little challenging, which resulted in their reluctance to write the dialogues. In my view, the students enjoyed the activity very much; nevertheless, I was not absolutely satisfied with the piloting of the activity since in a group of mostly advanced students the activity lacked the anticipated accomplishment.

I see the failure of the second part in the fact that the group was so advanced that it was only language fluency we could have practised (with the instructions and situations given); however, the situations described in the dialogues were still too general for the possibilities of an upper-intermediate or advanced student. The task might have been more difficult if the assignment had sound differently, had more specific instructions, compelled the use of more specialized words or placed demands on the style in which the dialogues should have been written.

Nevertheless, the activity had also several strong points. In lower levels it could be used to practise learnt phrases or just reacting to daily situations. Moreover, there are many ways how to vary the activity: students could create their own situations, all situations could be very specific and related to one area only – e.g., business conversations (this may have helped preventing the outcome of my group), students can be given words or phrases they have to use in their dialogue, and other. The focus of the activity can be transformed as well. In our case it was mostly fluency and readiness that we practised; nevertheless, sentence intonation, new vocabulary, language politeness and other specific features of English could be brought to prominence.

7.5 In a Queue

Activity Description

Focus	Present simple tense, discussion, daily routine, creativity, icebreaker
Level	Lower intermediate – advanced
Time	Minimum 25 minutes
Grouping	Groups of 3/4
Preparation	Blackboard, worksheet for each student, large piece of paper for every group
Aims	Students will share their daily routines (time they spend waiting) Students will consider and suggest some creative ways of spending time.

7.5.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) Motivate your students by asking this question: Do you know how much time a day you spend waiting for something? You can write this question on the blackboard.
- 2) Divide the students into smaller groups of three or four, give them a large piece of paper, markers and ask them to draw a circle all over the paper.
- 3) The circle represents their common day. Their task is to draw or illustrate by symbols activities during their day that are connected to waiting when they are not doing anything in particular. They should also discuss how much time of the day they spend by waiting. Naturally, a common day of every student differs; nevertheless, they should consider any of such situations they get into every day together and all agree on a number telling how much time per day each of them spends waiting.

During the activity:

4) After the students have finished drawing, ask one of the group to present their poster with pictures and say aloud the number they all agreed on. Challenge every group to present their poster one by one.

5) Motivate your students for the second part. I usually use a true story about my friend from Egypt:

I have a friend Gamal who works for one mobile phone operator in Cairo, Egypt, but he lives outside the city. Every day he has to commute by car to the capital. He leaves early morning and in about thirty minutes he gets to his work. However, his way back home in the late afternoon takes sometimes four hours because the traffic is so heavy that there is no chance to get there faster.

Students usually want to hear the details of the story immediately but do not tell them anything until they think about their own waiting situations first.

6) Tell your students that now they will focus in greater detail on their day and they will also speak about what they do when waiting. Give each student a card with several situations to find out what people usually do during these moments of their day. The cards could be used in various ways: every student can go round the class and inquire other students (in case there are enough students in the class and room to move around) or each student can fill it in individually.

7) After they have finished, ask volunteers to read their cards or you can randomly ask about several boxes from the worksheet.

After the activity:

8) For a reflection, divide your students into groups and let them in about 10 minutes propose other creative ways of spending those waiting moments. The outcomes of their work can be presented in pictures or by short presentations.

7.5.2 Student's Worksheet

What do you do while ...	
... you are waiting in the doctor's office?	... you are standing in a traffic jam?
... you are in the elevator?	... standing in a supermarket queue?
... sitting on the bus?	... sitting in the dentist's chair?
... you are waiting for a delayed friend?	... waiting for your meal in a restaurant?

7.5.3 Piloting

Observation

When I asked the opening question, my students did not react very much, they seemed as if they had not fully understood the question; however, when I divided them into groups and announced a drawing activity, they seemed very pleased. They formed two groups. In one group there were predominantly young people who easily agreed on most activities; on the contrary, the second group was more interesting since its members represented different generations, some of the students were married and had children so that their lifestyles differed to a great deal.

Some of the waiting situations my students mentioned:

- ⤴ When the coffee machine is preparing my coffee
- ⤴ When I'm starting my old computer
- ⤴ When waiting for my son in front of the school
- ⤴ When calling the dog until he comes back from the garden
- ⤴ In a queue in the bank
- ⤴ Before my morning bus arrives

Most of the students used the possibility to draw the task, the rest simply wrote their ideas in the circle they had prepared. We had a very short discussion about their posters, still, this part of the activity took more time than was expected. In the second part of the activity, students were working individually and filled their worksheets in. Because we spent too much time on the previous discussion, there was not much time left for sharing the content of the worksheets between the students later.

For the last part of the activity, the students were divided into new groups of four. There was little time in which students should have discussed some other creative ways of spending their waiting time. This part of the activity was greatly appreciated by students who loved any kind of creative task and these students immediately became creative managers of their groups. There was not time to draw their suggestions but at

least some of them were put down. As an example, here are some creative ideas of what one could do when waiting in the doctor's office:

- ♣ Pretend that you have some terrible disease (flu or worse) and talk about it so that everyone could hear
- ♣ Move: meditate or exercise, head stands would make you feel much happier; you can practise martial arts (kung-fu, tai-chi or other)
- ♣ Make a fictitious call to a famous celebrity as if he/she was an old friend and chat about private matters
- ♣ Take a notebook and start drawing other patients sitting in the room (if you don't know how to, it doesn't matter)

Teacher's Evaluation

The activity started in a nice atmosphere: my students were surprised by the task they were given and most of them enjoyed drawing very much. During the first part, the students were speaking for a longer time than was originally expected and thus there was not enough time left for a discussion about their worksheets. The last, creative part, was appreciated by students who loved less structured creative tasks in which they could improvise but other students, on the contrary, did not know how to approach the task and looked puzzled.

The activity had potential, which was not fulfilled because of unbalanced time management and a lack of more elaborated goals as well. The time management would have been more efficient if the activity was shorter and was presented as an introduction to a broader issue (such as 'time', 'present simple tense' in case of less advanced students etc.). A shorter and more condensed activity would be beneficial for the goals as well. In the last part, there should appear a safe role for less creative students, who expect clearly set instructions and seek answers in their experience or knowledge. These students could choose the role of a proofreader, an illustrator or other.

Even though the first part of this activity did not have any specific language goal set, the strong point of this activity lied in its potential to enable students to get to know

each other more. We have learnt that one of the students had a dog and owned a family house because the dog spent time in the garden. It was also clear that the garden must have been fairly large if my student could water rose beds before the dog came back from the garden after she had called him back. Other student confessed that when waiting in the doctor's office, he usually spent most of the time smoking outside. This immediately triggered a discussion about smoking habits of the participants present. To sum up, this activity in the piloted form proved very efficient as an advanced kind of an ice-breaker but less ambitious as an activity to gain knowledge about the language itself.

7.6 The Best Company Prize

Activity Description

Focus	Team roles, cooperation, problem solving
Level	Lower intermediate – advanced
Time	30 minutes
Grouping	Groups of 4
Preparation	A copy of the letter in an envelope for every group
Aims	Students will cooperate to solve a problem Students will reflect on their cooperation Students will write a formal letter

7.6.1 Teacher's Notes

Procedure

Before the activity:

- 1) At first, motivate your students and give them instructions to the activity at the same time. Make this announcement:

Your company has been awarded by a very prestigious prize “Top Company” for the most successful company in the field for this year. The criteria for winning this award were very strict but you succeeded. Your boss would like to inform you about the event and thank you personally for your good and devoted work in his personal letter addressed to you. There are only several copies of the letter so you should divide into groups of four in order that everyone could read it.

2) After the students have divided, give them a copy of the letter in an envelope and before they open it, tell them to follow the instructions given in the letter. You should also announce the time they have to complete the whole task (20 min.).

3) (In the task, they are informed about the award and the fact that the company has also won a certain amount of money. Their task is to decide how the money will be spent; however, they must follow several rules. The outcome of the activity should be a written letter to their highest superior in which they explain how the money should be used and provide some supportive arguments. Moreover, one student from the group takes the role of an observer: he does not interfere in the task solving but closely observes the others from the group and monitors their behaviour.)

During the activity:

4) During the task you can answer additional questions, monitor students' work and regularly inform the groups about the time they have left.

5) When 20 minutes have finished, ask one student from every group to read their letter aloud.

After the activity:

6) Cater to all students' questions related to what you want to reflect on in the debate; you can add some more questions based on what you have seen during their work on the assignment. If the focus is their cooperation, the questions might follow for instance this way:

How did you enjoy the task?

Are you happy with the result of your 20 minutes of work?

How did you proceed with the task?

What helped you agree on a single solution what to do with the money?

How did you carry your own ideas through?

What was your role in the group?

How did you contribute to your collective work?

What weaknesses of your cooperation did you see?

How would you prevent them next time?

Could you name one thing you aspect you succeeded in?

Which part of your work/cooperation could be improved and how?

In case you want to reflect more on their use of English, different questions (in the middle part, in particular) should appear:

Did you manage to carry the whole assignment in English? Why you did/did not?

Which requirements of a formal written letter did you follow?

Who/what guaranteed the correctness of your grammar?

What questions you asked yourselves no-one could convincingly answer?

Etc.

7) Before the discussion is over, do not forget to ask the observing students to sum up interesting comments on what they have seen. Their comments should be based on the instructions in the letter they should have stuck to.

8) Eventually, every student should write down in his notebook three pieces of information he considers useful and important to remember for the next time. It can be anything they find worth remembering from grammar rules to the principles of cooperation. Challenge your students to share what they have written if they like.

Teacher's Sheet: The Letter and Instructions

My dear colleagues,

as you may have noticed, our company has been recently awarded by a prestigious Top Company Award for the best company in the field. In the last 3 years we have done everything to reach this award and this year we have finally succeeded. The competitors were very strong and experienced players this year but it was our company who was finally chosen by the professional committee. I am sure that this award will open doors to more clients and new contracts in the next years. It also demonstrates our proficiency in the field.

For this reason, I would like to thank you sincerely because it was also your responsible attitude towards your job and your enthusiasm that substantially contributed to our win. A part of the prize was also 100 000 CZK that we received. As a gesture of thanks, I would be very glad if the money was used for something that would strengthen the relationships in the company or make our working place a nicer place to meet and work. Please feel free to make suggestions how to use the money. Come with concrete ideas and don't forget that we all should enjoy the money.

With warm regards,

.....

⤴ You have 20 minutes to write a formal letter about 150 words long to your superior with a concrete solution how to spend the money you all agree on. Maintain the requirements you were given in the letter and don't forget to support your solutions by arguments.

⤴ One of you (decide on your own who) will take another role in this activity. He will be an observer. He won't participate in writing the letter and stay silent for the whole time. His task will be to watch you working and make notes if anything remarkable appears.

⤴ If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

7.6.2 Piloting

Observation

After the first instructions were presented, my students started to ask many questions, which I tried to ignore. Later on, the questions were followed by remarks on the boss and the task. To prevent other questions and remarks, I encouraged the students to divide into groups and each group received the letter. While reading, some students were asking questions but were told to read the whole text first and then question.

One of the groups started working almost immediately since these students had no problems working together and moreover, one of the students was extremely active and started to organize the whole process. In this group, no-one was eager to take the observer's role but finally, one of the students decided to do so and accepted the role saying: "I'm a financial controller in this company so who else can conduct such a responsible task?" The other group was slower in reading and these students also needed me to answer many questions as well. Unluckily, most of these questions were nor relevant to the task itself. Nevertheless, when this group finally started, they took the task very seriously.

The first group needed less time but the students enjoyed the task and suggested incredible solutions. Eventually, they came with an elegant solution: The male part of the group wanted to spend the sum on sport activities but the ladies, in contrast, would rather buy new furniture for their office. Eventually, they decided to split the money; use one half of it on bowling as a social event for the whole company and the second half invest in a new coffee machine and office redecoration.

In comparison, the second group spent less time discussing the purpose of the money; nevertheless, these students demanded more time to finish their letter and one of the students insisted on rewriting the letter. This group also focused on conducting the letter in a very formal manner. Their idea was to organize a big dinner for everyone in a famous luxurious restaurant in Prague because they served there delicious meat

specialties and offered many kinds of salad as well. They believed that this offer would be acceptable for both ladies and gentlemen.

In the reflective part of the activity, students from the first group expressed their satisfaction with the result of the letter. They enjoyed working on the task, they were satisfied with their cooperation and would not change almost anything. One of the students mentioned that they could have dedicated more time to the writing part and check the mistakes; nevertheless, everyone was overall satisfied. Not surprisingly, the students from the second group were more critical about their collaboration. They criticized the fact that no-one took the role of the leader, which was causing long discussions but no-one dared to say the last word and decide. Furthermore, this group literally forced the observer to share all his comments. The observer from this group took his duty more seriously and was able to provide many useful comment on the whole process.

Teacher's Evaluation

The main objective of this activity was to see how independently my students could work in a situation where only a few rules were given while the rest of the task was completely on the students. The task served also as an indicator of my students' ability to write a formal letter, which I planned to focus on in the next class.

I found the activity very beneficial because it has clearly shown the differences between the groups and their organizations. In the first group, there were students who worked in the same office and were in the same division; however, the second group was less organized, had no leader and the students did not know each other as well as the students from the first group. They also belonged to various divisions and probably were not used to cooperate together. The first group also focused less on the task itself and enjoyed the discussion whereas the second group cared more about the letter outline, the grammar and in the final reflection, spoke very critically about their method and cooperation.

8 Conclusions

In this thesis experiential education has been successfully applied as a methodology to teaching English as a foreign language; moreover, in a very formal environment of a company course, which in most cases provides little room and very limited teaching aids. Furthermore, it has been shown that experiential learning can be successfully employed in teaching English to adult learners.

In the theoretical part, the beginning of experiential education which was substantially influenced by humanistic approach in psychology and later formed into a larger movement focusing predominantly on the learner was presented. Experiential education as a methodology and experiential learning as a process of acquiring knowledge and skills were defined. Besides the disunity in terminology, the range of various conceptions of experiential education and learning has shown that researchers vary in their opinions on the approach a great deal. Moreover, the methodology lacks more support in case studies and in the Czech Republic it has not reached the institutions of formal education yet. So far, the methodology applied almost exclusively in non-formal education.

Furthermore, the key principles of the method have been treated and the importance of reflecting the experience has been shown. In the following chapters, the focus was on learning styles – Kolb's conception of learning styles in particular. Next to *Kolb's Learning Cycle*, which applies the knowledge of the learning style typology in practice, the teacher, the learner and the environment during the process of experiential gain of knowledge and skills has been analyzed. The final section was concerned with the adult learner: the aspects that distinguish the adult learner from the child learner, the

intentions and motivation involved in their learning and general characteristics of the adult learner as such.

The practical part made use of the theoretical knowledge of the approach and presented six activities for teaching English to adult learners designed according to the principals of experiential education. Moreover, one of the conditions on which the activities were based was that each activity must have been feasible in any type of classroom, with limited aids and materials. Similarly, each activity was designed in order to be easily variable for other levels of English proficiency, different language topics or specific groups of students. Each activity has been described, prepared and piloted in a class of adult students attending an English company course. The piloting was enriched by my observations from the piloting and the final evaluation of each activity. In some cases, students' comments on the process of learning and the outcome of their work was presented to illustrate the activity as well.

Most of the piloted activities focused on speaking and fluency skills, communication and collaboration. One of the activities used the problem-solving method; nevertheless, the scope of the experiential methodology is a great deal larger and more colourful; still, it is on the side of the teachers to unlock its hidden potential. Based on the successful fulfillment of the goals set in the introduction, it has been shown that experiential education can help learners gain knowledge and skills, and moreover, it can works on acquiring competencies needed for success on today's labour market.

The outcome of most activities was positive, the students enjoyed them and I certainly gained more experience as a teacher. As a result, I plan to continue in improving and refining the presented activities as well as my teaching skills. What has shown in the piloting part was the fact that in teaching adults the possibility to engage students previous experience, their personal interests and private needs is crucial for successful teaching and learning. Adult learners can generally reflect on their needs, their knowledge and its lack very well; if the teacher creates an environment of mutual

support and confidence and gives his students a chance to express these needs, he might reach excellent results.

On the other hand, some of the piloted activities have proved that students are not used to reflect on their meta-learning skills and cognitive strategies. Sometimes they tend to prefer types of exercises (such as, 'fill in a word' or 'write the word in the correct form') where they use limited knowledge. These skills are necessary, useful for level of proficiency testing, but in most cases do not correspond to the complexity of real life situations and actual language use.

In case of adult language learners, there is a constant problem of their compulsion to be still partially on the phone and ready to leave the class at any moment in order to solve work or family matters. This leads into a decline of their attention and lack of concentration on the given task. Furthermore, cooperation in groups where the learners do not know each other very well can be intricate and the teacher should do her best to help developing their cooperative skills. Yet, some learners prefer to work individually and the teacher should respect their wish of modify the activity so that the task would be equally beneficial to all learners.

A future application of the method for teaching English to adults could be seen in activities similar to those presented in the practical part of this work. They would function as an enrichment of the traditional teaching methods, they would focus on collaboration, soft-skills development and help learners apply their theoretical knowledge of grammar rules in practice. The methodology of experiential education would engage them in activities practising complex skills and would prepare them for real life situation.

The work aimed at bringing together experiential education, language learning and the specifics of the adult learner as have been scrutinized in the theoretical part. The author strongly believes that experiential methodology reacts to new trends in learning but primarily, to the demands of the labour market and employers, who are searching for

specialist in their fields but also employees that are masters of soft-skills at the same time. Experiential education provides methods that contribute to attaining both hard skills and soft skills, methods that consolidate relationships between learners and that are concerned with meta-cognitive strategies to acquire these new skills. Moreover, the teacher can monitor the process of students' learning during the time the learning itself takes place because he can observe their reasoning during their cooperation on a task. Another great benefit of experiential method is connected to evaluation of the teaching and learning process. The teacher does not need any special questionnaires to fill in after the end of the course – he is being constantly evaluated in regular reflections as well as students systematically evaluate their own progress in the learning.

Before concluding, several questions (each of them would deserve individual treatment) arose during the piloting of the activities and examining related literature. Since their proper treatment would lie outside the scope of this thesis, they will be briefly outlined as a possible material to research in the future.

- ✦ What is the degree to which the teacher should lead the student in the access to the particular knowledge he wants him to gain?
- ✦ How can the teacher help the student develop a more sensitive relationship to his own learning and raise his awareness of meta-cognitive strategies?
- ✦ Which strategies could the teacher employ when drawing less attractive topics closer to the student's self-centre?

To conclude, the research of the literature related to experiential education and the piloting of the activities have confirmed the fact that experiential education has unrevealed potential to become an efficient method to teach English to adults in a more complex way. The future of experiential education could be seen in raising motivated, conscious, self-directed and versatile learners, who can apply a whole range of learning methods, and who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

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